Bengaluru Monday, June 15, 2026 Pages 16 Vol 79 No 165 ₹7

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

India stun fancied South Korea twice

Dhiraj completes golden double in archery World Cup

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> We have told the Speaker that we are merging with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India. Moving forward, we will work for the nation and collaborate with the NDA under the leadership of the prime minister.
>
> **KAKOLI GHOSH DASTIDAR,** Rebel TMC MP

> Indian democracy has become the 'theatre of the absurd'. A joke! The rebels of the TMC legislative party cannot merge with a political party; that can happen only if the TMC wished to do so! Disqualify them!
>
> **KAPIL SIBAL,** Rajya Sabha MP

Rebel TMC MPs announce merger with Tripura party

Dissidents meet Speaker Birla, seek separate seating in Lok Sabha

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla receives a letter from rebel TMC MPs for a separate seating arrangement in the House, in New Delhi, on Sunday. PTI

Latest jolt to Mamata's party

Development comes after TMC national gen secy Abhishek Banerjee wrote to Speaker, asking him not to recognise rebels' demand for separate seating

- Dissidents first gather at the residence of Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav to seal strategy
- Then they head to Speaker's residence, accompanied by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey
- Dastidar claims 20 MPs signed letter to Speaker; sources put the number at 19
- Rebel MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay says they will make a demand for the status of 'real' Trinamool

The post-election crisis in Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress reached a crescendo on Sunday with at least 19 rebel MPs announcing that they will be merging with a little-known 'Nationalist Citizens Party of India' (NCPI) and officially urging Speaker Om Birla to allot them separate seating in the Lok Sabha.

The development is the latest in the party's downward spiral after around 60 of the 80 MLAs went against Mamata in the West Bengal Assembly and three MPs quit the Rajya Sabha, with the Upper House seats all set to go to the ruling BJP in the ensuing bypolls. With rebels claiming support of 20 MPs, Mamata is left with the support of just eight MPs in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Rajya Sabha.

The merger announcement, following the rebels' meeting with Birla, came soon after TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee wrote to the Speaker, asking him to treat Trinamool as a single party and not recognise the rebels' demand for sitting as a separate bloc. His letter was handed over to Birla's office by party MPs Kirti Azad and Sagarika Ghose.

The NCPI is a registered, unrecognised party based out of Tripura.

Earlier, the dissidents, led by Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, had gathered at the residence of Union minister Bhupendra Yadav, who was also the BJP's Bengal in-charge.

"...We, 20 MPs elected from the TMC, met the Speaker and submitted a letter requesting to sit separately. These 20 MPs constitute more than two-thirds of our total strength," Dastidar, a former confidante of Mamata, said.

▸ TMC, Page 5
'Operation Tiger' buzz in Maharashtra, Page 13

Levies to fund affordable housing?

State govt proposes K'taka Affordable Housing Fund

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

Funding dedicated corpus through...

- Additional buyer stamp duty on second homes
- Progressive stamp duty slab rates
- Additional stamp duty on houses purchased by overseas and NRI buyers

- Charging premiums on development projects availing additional Floor Space Index
- Levying a shelter fee on large private housing projects
- Imposing a slum cess

Karnataka is exploring a range of new levies, including additional stamp duty on second homes and NRI homebuyers, fees on vacant sites and premiums on development projects, to create a dedicated corpus for affordable housing in the state.

This was discussed during the first stakeholders' meeting held on June 12, taking cue from Maharashtra's Niwara Nidhi and Tamil Nadu's Shelter Fund.

The proposed Karnataka Affordable Housing Fund (KAHF) aims to provide a sustainable source of financing for housing schemes targeted at economically weaker sections (EWS) and low-income groups (LIG).

The government-run Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Ltd, which chaired the meeting of different stakeholders, including CREDAI, noted that the proposal was first announced in the state budget of 2024-25.

"This is the first of several meetings we plan to conduct before sending the final proof of concept to the government," Parashurama Shinnalkar, Managing Director of the corporation, told *DH*. He added that the revenue options were preliminary and would require the government's approval before any final decision was taken.

Officials noted that the cost of construction has doubled in the past decade but the earnings of EWS have not seen a similar growth.

▸ Homebuyers, Page 5

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke, actor Prakash Raj and activist Sonam Wangchuk in Bengaluru. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

'Boycott communal politics': CJP founder in B'luru

BENGALURU, DHNS: Cockroach Janata Party founder Abhijeet Dipke on Sunday accused the BJP-led Union government of practising "communal politics", and wondered whether only those in the BJP IT Cell were Indians.

"Ever since this government came to power, they started Hindu-Muslim (politics). Every election they try to divide us using the Hindu-Muslim narrative. Because of this, people think of themselves as Hindus or Muslims. We should think of ourselves as Indians first... It's because of this communal politics that we have the highest unemployment in 40 years. Promise me today that we will boycott communal politics," Dipke told a protest gathering by the CJP at Freedom Park.

▸ CJP, Page 5

Amid Anthropic move, India & France stress inclusive AI

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron in France on Sunday. PTI

India and France on Sunday stressed the need for collaborative and inclusive development of Artificial Intelligence, even as a directive from the US government citing security concerns recently prompted Anthropic, a leading frontier technology company, to suspend access to its most advanced models.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron met in Nice, the two leaders adopted an "Innovation Roadmap 2030" to deepen collaboration in AI and other critical and emerging technologies, as well as to expand cooperation between start-ups and incubator ecosystems. They announced the creation of a joint India-France working group on AI governance, apart from establishing an India Chair on AI, Innovation, and Culture at Université Paris-Saclay near the national capital of France.

"The foundational principle of our AI vision is 'AI for All – Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya (for the welfare and well-being of all)'," Modi said as he and Macron jointly inaugurated "Bharat Innovates 2026" earlier in the day.

The prime minister said that every technological revolution presented humanity with a new opportunity, and every opportunity also brought with it a new responsibility. "Today, the world is looking towards technologies that are trusted, inclusive, human-centric, and aimed at global good. At such a time, India's priority is technology for humanity and human-centric innovation."

▸ India-France, Page 5

Modi pushes defence tech transfer

PM Narendra Modi told French President Macron that bilateral defence cooperation should be anchored in maximum local content and manufacturing in India, backed by the technology transfer. P13

Monsoon likely to enter sluggish phase: IMD

BENGALURU, DHNS: Many parts of Karnataka, including Bengaluru, received rainfall on Sunday, but the southwest monsoon could weaken in the next few days, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

While rainfall ranged from moderate to heavy on Sunday, the monsoon is weakening in most parts of the state due to little to no major activity, said Puviarasan N, Scientist 'E' and Head of the Meteorological Centre, IMD.

In Bengaluru, a sudden Sunday evening downpour caused severe waterlogging, paralysing traffic in central hubs and key IT corridors like Whitefield and Marathahalli. Choked drains left arterial roads, junctions and underpasses flooded. Thousands of commuters faced hours of gridlock.

▸ Monsoon, Page 5
Evening downpour drenches city, Page 2

Trump says Iran deal close, fumes over Israel's Beirut strike

WASHINGTON, AFP: US President Donald Trump insisted on Sunday that a deal to end the West Asia war was just "hours" away, angrily blaming Israel for delaying its signing with an airstrike on Beirut that drew threats of retaliation from Iran.

Trump has pledged that the agreement will be signed Sunday — his 80th birthday — while Tehran has declined to offer a clear timeline, though both sides have signalled that diplomatic channels remained open. However, Israel's strike on Sunday in Beirut prompted Iran to question the point of continuing talks.

Details on Page 12
14 Indian sailors rescued, P8

An Israeli strike in Lebanon on Sunday. AFP

GREEN MOVE

Forest dept to recover Rs 400-cr land in Sirsi after 36-yr delay

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Chronology of a quagmire

1969: Govt leases 379 acres to Sri Kamadhenu Co-op Milk & Fruit Processing Society

1986: Govt asks society to return 200 acres of unutilised forest land; order not followed

1989: Lease ended

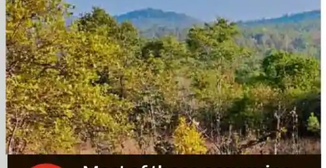
1993: DCF asks society to vacate land

2005: HC quashes DCF order, but allows eviction as per law

2010-13: Govt decides not to renew lease; asks forest dept to recover land

2013-25: No action

2026: Forest dept issues eviction notice; society appeals before CCF, who rejects it, orders it to vacate



> Most of those occupying the land are rich farmers with influence. Political pressure and a tendency of bureaucracy to steer clear of tough decisions means the file was not opened again for two decades.
>
> -An official

After a 36-year delay, the forest department is set to recover 379 acres of pristine land located next to a highway between Sirsi and Banavasi in Uttara Kannada district.

While the current commercial value of the land is estimated to be over Rs 400 crore, officials point to its ecologically sensitive nature, citing regular movement of wildlife, especially elephants.

The development comes after protracted legal battles in civil court and high court, administrative apathy and allegations of pressure exerted by influential landholders.

The crux of the matter can be traced back to 1969 when the state government had leased the land, spread across three villages in Sirsi taluk, to Sri Kamadhenu Cooperative Milk and Fruit Processing Society.

In 1976, the government issued another order, reducing the lease period from 30 to 20 years.

The lease effectively ended in 1989. Even prior to the end of the lease, the government had in 1986 asked the cooperative society to hand over 200 acres of the unutilised forest land. However, the order was not followed.

The lease was not renewed as the Forest (Conservation) Act that came into effect in 1980 would not allow the use of forest land for non-forest purposes without the Union government's approval.

In 1993, the then deputy conservator of forests (DCF), Sirsi division, directed the society to vacate the area. However, instead of invoking Section 64A of the Karnataka Forest Act, 1963, the officer had issued a legal notice, which dragged the department into a legal quagmire.

The society moved a civil court while some of its members moved the Karnataka High Court. The civil court initially gave an injunction and in 2005 quashed the DCF's notice but allowed eviction "as per the law".

▸ Forest dept, Page 5

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Stress, peer pressure fuel polysubstance abuse among youth, warn doctors

Say mixing substances can significantly multiply health risks

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

City hospitals are reporting a rise in polysubstance abuse, with combinations of alcohol, drugs and other substances leading to overdoses and organ damage, doctors say.

"Combinations such as caffeine and alcohol, or energy drinks and alcohol, mask the sedative effects of alcohol while increasing its toxicity. We are seeing a disturbing spike in emergency room visits among young adults for these combinations. What begins as a party trend can turn into a matter of life and death," said Dr Pradeep Haranahalli, Consultant, Interventional Cardiology.

Doctors say one of the most dangerous combinations is opioids with alcohol or sedatives such as benzodiazepines, which

can collectively cause breathing complications and significantly raise the risk of death.

Mixing stimulants and depressants places extreme stress on the heart and nervous system. Patients with polysubstance abuse require longer ICU stay and face a higher likelihood of complications.

Dr Firozahmad H Torgal, Additional Director, Emergency Medicine, said the most severe complications included respiratory failure, cardiac emergencies such as heart rhythm disturbances or cardiac arrest, seizures, stroke, coma, and multiple organ failure involving the kidneys and liver.

"Some substances can also cause dangerously high body temperature, severe infections and extreme blood pressure fluctuations that can rapidly result in death. A single episode of misuse, especially involving highly potent or unknown combinations, can be enough to cause respiratory failure, permanent brain injury, or death," he said.

Many drugs obtained outside medical settings may be contaminated with other toxic substances, making their effects unpredictable, Dr Torgal added.

Clinical Psychologist Dr Sugami Ramesh said that peer pressure and emotional turmoil were primary drivers among young people. "Emotional stress is one of the factors that is persistent."

High-risk & deadly combinations

- Alcohol + opioids
- Alcohol + sedatives (benzodiazepines)
- Alcohol + energy drinks/caffeine
- Stimulants + depressants

> We are seeing a disturbing spike in emergency room visits among young adults for these combinations. What begins as a party trend can turn into a matter of life and death.
> **DR PRADEEP HARANAHALLI,** Consultant, Interventional Cardiology

EXPERTS' WARNING

A single episode of polysubstance use can lead to respiratory failure, cardiac arrest, permanent brain injury, multiple organ failure or death.

Three city cops held in Rajasthan bribery trap

BENGALURU, DHNS: Officials of the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) have arrested three Bengaluru police personnel for allegedly accepting a bribe from a suspect in a dowry harassment case.

The arrested personnel have been identified as sub-inspector Anita and head constables Yatish Kumar and Ulvappa, all attached to the HAL police station, where the case was registered.

In a statement, the Rajasthan ACB said the three had travelled to Jaipur in connection with the investigation and demanded a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from the suspect in exchange for relief and dilution of the case.

After verifying the complaint, the ACB laid a trap at Hotel Gangaur in Jaipur and caught the three officials red-handed while accepting Rs 40,000 as part of the bribe amount.

"The ACB team is currently interrogating the police officials," the agency said.

According to the statement, the operation was led by ACB Additional Superintendent of Police Bhupendra Chaudhary, under the supervision of Deputy Inspector General Om Prakash Meena and the direction of Director General Govind Gupta and Additional Director General Smita Srivastava.

Senior Bengaluru police officers were not immediately available for comment.

DOWNPOUR FALLOUT: Commuters stuck, junctions choked with every monsoon rain

Frustratingly familiar: City swamped again

BENGALURU, DHNS

A sudden downpour on Sunday evening flooded major roads across Bengaluru, bringing traffic to a standstill and forcing thousands to seek shelter.

Central areas, including Majestic, Town Hall, Shivajinagar, Corporation Circle, Chickpet and Rajajinagar, endured most of the rain, which overwhelmed the city's drainage system within minutes.

Heavy waterlogging was reported at Munisingh Junction towards Whitefield and near Windsor Manor towards Railway Parallel Road.

Vehicles heading to the airport faced long delays due to water accumulation on the CBI upper ramp.

Deep water at Devasandra Junction and Vidyashilpa Junction slowed traffic to a crawl.

Near GRT Junction, deep water nearly halted movement between the city and Hoskote.

In the IT corridors, roads around Vartur Kodi Forum Mall, Tubarahalli, Siddapur and Balagere were flooded, leaving tech professionals stranded for hours.

Commuters on roads connecting Kengeri to Mariyappana Palya, Hulimavu to Arikere Junction, Bapuji Nagara to Kengeri, and around the Ayyappa Underpass towards Madiwala also faced severe delays.

"The water accumulates within 10 minutes of rain because the shoulder drains are completely choked with plastic and silt. Every year, we face the same situation at the major junctions," said a commuter who took shelter under a flyover.

Rainfall report

The Bengaluru City observatory recorded 14.5 mm of rainfall, HAL Airport 0.8 mm, and Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) 0.5 mm.

> The water accumulates within 10 minutes of rain because the shoulder drains are completely choked with plastic and silt. Every year, we face the same situation at the major junctions.
> **COMMUTER**

Vehicles moved at a crawl near Munisingh Junction towards Whitefield after heavy rain on Sunday inundated sections of the road.

Waterlogging at Windsor Manor towards Railway Parallel Road. PHOTOS: BTP

ORR rain problems persist despite targeted fixes, heavy police presence

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

Despite deploying 2,200 personnel on the ground and making targeted interventions in chronic bottlenecks, inadequate civic infrastructure is proving to be a steeper challenge for the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP).

For instance, the downpour earlier this week still turned the Outer Ring Road (ORR) into a virtual waterway, bringing traffic to a near halt from KR Puram to Silk Board and exposing the severe limitations of the BTP's strategy.

The police force had mapped 137 waterlogging hotspots and pressed heavy machinery into service for rapid water clearance.

Karthik Reddy, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), said the BTP marked vulnerable locations with civic agencies, prioritising chronic bottlenecks in Mahadevapura Zone, including Bellandur, Marathahalli Junction, Mahadevapura, Kadubeesanahalli and parts of HSR Layout.

Authorities immediately alerted the GBA, Bescom and BWSSB whenever blockages or flooding were reported.

Ongoing drain work at Silk Board Junction has led to traffic congestion, with vehicles moving at a slow pace through one of Bengaluru's busiest junctions. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

To speed up the clearance of fallen trees and stranded vehicles, traffic police have stationed tree-cutting machinery, JCBs and tow trucks at key corridors, including Nayandahalli Junction, Goraguntepalya, Dairy Circle, Silk Board Junction, and Sindhoor Choultry Junction.

Reddy said personnel would place barricades and divert vehicle users along preplanned alternative routes whenever underpasses flood.

To manage heavier evening traffic during downpours, the traffic police have deployed more than 2,200 personnel, home guards and traffic wardens equipped with raincoats and reflective jackets.

Despite these measures, the ORR flooded, choking stretches around Bellandur, Panathur, Varthur and Marathahalli.

The rain stranded officegoers, cab and auto passengers for hours. Commuters said a two-kilometre ride took several hours.

Traffic personnel blamed the congestion on narrowed carriageways around drain-widening works and the stormwater drainage network overflowing within minutes.

"During heavy rain, the existing stormwater network overflows almost instantly. Despite our personnel working past midnight to divert vehicles, the volume of peak-hour traffic did not reduce until the floodwater receded," a traffic policeman said.

Commuters said ongoing construction had reduced parts of the corridor to a single muddy lane, worsening congestion.

"The new double decker flyover was supposed to relieve Silk Board Junction, but now it has shifted the gridlock to Marathahalli and Bellandur. The ongoing drain expansion work has reduced the usable road into a single, muddy lane. Evening downpour turns the entire corridor into a stagnant pool, leaving us stuck in our cars," said Rohan S, a daily commuter.

"Every time a heavy bus moves through the flooded stretch, it creates a wave that pushes the dirty, black drain water to the footpaths," Rohan added. "Authorities come and dig up the shoulder drains every summer, leaving the silt right on the edge of the pavement and the first rain washes it right back inside."

Pai Layout residents hit the streets over civic neglect

BENGALURU, DHNS: Residents of Pai Layout near Tin Factory Junction took to the streets on Sunday, demanding immediate action from civic authorities on poor roads, clogged drains and garbage collection.

The march, organised by the Pai Layout Residents Welfare Association (PLRWA), drew over 100 residents, including working professionals, senior citizens, children, and women.

Five demands

The association listed five demands: desilting of drains, cleaning and vent-widening of the stormwater drain beneath the railway underbridge, asphalting of pothole-riddled roads, removal of footpath encroachments, and regular door-to-door garbage collection.

The locality houses over 5,000 residents across 68 apartment complexes and around 200 independent houses.

"We are a law-abiding neighbourhood paying substantial income tax and property tax year after year. Yet, basic urban infrastructure is being denied to us," said NH Subramanian, Secretary, PLRWA.

"We have made countless formal representations to the civic body over the months, but ground action has been none. We called this year's situation IPL, short for Inaction, Promises and Lapses. This cannot continue and we will keep staging protests until permanent redressal is achieved."

Immediate action

Following the march, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao contacted the PLRWA leadership and deputed Sudha, Joint Commissioner, KR Puram Zone, to the spot.

She held an emergency review meeting with PLRWA members and residents, inspected the choked stormwater drain, and assured the community that action on the five demands would be initiated within the week.

IPL: Inaction, Promises & Lapses

Frustrated by what they describe as years of civic neglect, Pai Layout residents coined their own version of 'IPL'—Inaction, Promises and Lapses—to highlight the gap between assurances and on-ground action. They said they would continue protests until permanent solutions are provided for poor roads, clogged drains and garbage collection issues.

Residents raise slogans during the protest march in Pai Layout on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that my client **M/s. Prasiddhi Shriyam Ventures,** represented by its partner Sri. Balabathuri Srinivas a partnership firm, having its office at No. 79, 2nd Floor, Bhagyashri Complex,80ft Road, Opp-Ramaiah Hospital Gate, Sanjaynagar, Devasandra, RMV 2nd Stage,Bengaluru, Karnataka-560094 (hereinafter referred to as the "Proposed Purchaser"),is intending to purchase all those pieces and parcels of immovable properties bearing Property No. **4 (EPID No. 3671275606)** measuring **78 × 115 feet,** Place: Bengaluru Date: 12-06-2026 measuring **40 × 30 feet, Property No. 28 (EPID No. 7860003967)** measuring **40 × 30 feet** and **Property No. 26 (PID No. 1659966337)** measuring 40 × 30 feet, all being adjoining and contiguous to each other and together constituting one composite block of property situated at Ward No. 77, 1st Cross Road, Pipeline, Malleswaram, Bengaluru – 560 020, from its absolute owners **Managing Committee of Mahila Vidyalaya,** represented by the managing committee who claim to be the owners in possession and enjoyment of the Schedule Property.

Therefore, any person/s, banks, financial institutions or anybody having any right, title, interest, share, claim, lien, charge, mortgage, tenancy, easement, inheritance, acquisition proceedings, attachment, litigation or objection of whatsoever nature over the Schedule Property are hereby called upon to notify the same in writing to the undersigned together with supporting documentary proof within 7 (Seven) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be presumed that no person has any claim whatsoever over the Schedule Property and the proposed transaction shall be proceeded with without any further reference.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All those pieces and parcels of immovable properties bearing Property No. **4 (EPID No. 3671275606)** measuring **78 × 115 feet, Property No. 27 (EPID No. 2110757682) measuring 40 × 30 feet, Property No. 28 (EPID No. 7860003967)** measuring **40 × 30 feet** and **Property No. 26 (PID No. 1659966337)** measuring **40 × 30 feet,** all being adjoining and contiguous to each other and together constituting one composite block of property totally measuring 12627 square feet situated at Ward No. 77, 1st Cross Road, Pipeline, Malleswaram, Bengaluru – 560 020, and for the purpose of the present transaction, the same are collectively treated as one amalgamated property, bounded on the:

East by : Road;
West by : Conservancy Galli & Private Property;
North by : Road;
South by : Private Property.

Manjunath J S,
ANSHI LEGAL
Advocates & Solicitors,
No. #216, Chethan Illam, 7th Cross,
7th Main, Defence Layout, Sahakaranagara,
Bangalore– 560 092.
Ph:9980913373/9880345321
Place: Bengaluru Date: 12-06-2026

The seminar was conducted by Dr Sr Anna. Rev Fr Anthony Mahendran, Dr Sandhya Panicker and Rev Fr Vinoo Fabian were also present at the event.

Seminar on media education at St Aloysius Degree College

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Department of Journalism at St Aloysius Degree College organised a seminar on "Empowerment through Media Education" for students and aspiring media professionals.

The seminar was led by Dr Sr Anna, who emphasised that future journalists, content creators, writers and media professionals must uphold truth and justice while navigating the realities and challenges of the modern media landscape.

The session also highlighted the growing influence of citizen journalism and the freedom enjoyed by Gen Z in creating and sharing content across digital platforms, according to a release.

Siblings drown in farm pond with no fencing

BENGALURU, DHNS: Two siblings drowned in a farm pond in Doddaballapura taluk on Saturday, police said.

The deceased are Daksha (11) and Dhanush (4), residents of Thogarighatta village, police said.

Police said the siblings were playing near the pond in the afternoon while their parents had briefly stepped out.

They fell into the pond, which belonged to a local farmer, Gurumurthy, and drowned.

No safeguards

Preliminary investigations revealed the pond had no protective fencing or safety mechanisms. Doddaballapura Rural police have registered a case and launched a probe.

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner. Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @ deccanherald.co.in

Garbage collection hit in Thyagarajanagar

It is unfortunate that despite repeated complaints, garbage is not being cleared regularly in Thyagarajanagar 3rd Block (Basavanagudi Ward 154/198).

The areas around ESI Hospital and Muneshwara Temple have been particularly affected, with heaps of garbage remaining unattended for days.

Residents have repeatedly approached Solid Waste Management (SWM) officials, but with little success.

The reasons cited for irregular garbage collection include a shortage of lorries, lack of diesel, vehicle breakdowns and repair work. While these issues may occasionally arise, their repeated recurrence raises serious questions about the efficiency of the system and the accountability of those responsible.

The continued shifting of responsibility among SWM officials, marshals, garbage collectors and contractors has only added to residents' frustration. Despite numerous complaints, the problem remains unresolved.

We urge the authorities to conduct an immediate inspection, fix accountability and take corrective action.

Pralhad DG

Uncleared garbage has become a growing concern for residents.

Ministry of Culture Government of India

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING (CCRT)
(Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)
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"AWARD OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO YOUNG ARTISTES IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL FIELDS"

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Please note that applications are invited for the year 2026-27 with effect from **15th June, 2026.** There are 400 scholorships available this year. Details of the Scheme, instructions for applicants, eligibility conditions/criteria and application form are available on the following websites of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and CCRT.

www.indiaculture.gov.in, www.certindia.gov.in
31st July, 2026 is the last date for submission of applications.
ONLY OFFLINE APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED
CBC 09127/11/0003/2627

Married man strangles lover, stages poisoning

BENGALURU, DHNS

Police have booked a 33-year-old married autorickshaw driver for allegedly strangling his girlfriend and staging her death as a suicide in southwestern Bengaluru on Saturday.

The accused, Chandrashekar, strangled Bhavani S (22), who worked at a mobile phone store near Magadi Main Road, and sprinkled poison across the room to pass off the killing as suicide. He also consumed the same poison.

Bhavani's father, Srinivasa N, tried reaching her around 7 am after a relative informed him that his daughter had posted an Instagram story with an unidentified man.

Getting no response, he contacted her landlord's wife, who knocked on the door, but received no answer.

Srinivasa and his family members arrived from Bengaluru South around 9.30 am. Meanwhile, Byadarahalli police reached the scene and forced the door open. They found Bhavani lying motionless and Chandrashekar struggling. The room reeked of poison, according to the FIR.

Doctors declared Bhavani dead. Chandrashekar has been hospitalised and will be arrested once declared fit, police said.

Chandrashekar is married, but was in a relationship with Bhavani.

Her family had learnt of the relationship and decided to arrange her marriage to someone else. When Chandrashekar learnt of this, he threatened her with dire consequences.

Byadarahalli police have registered a murder case based on Srinivasa's complaint.

Darjeeling man kills Sikkim partner over suspected affair

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 22-year-old man from Darjeeling allegedly slit his live-in partner's throat following a heated argument over suspected infidelity at their home in Doddakannelli, Sarjapur Road, on Sunday.

Ati Hangma Subba and the accused, Purba Lepcha.

The accused, Purba Lepcha, killed his girlfriend Ati Hangma Subba, also 22, from Sikkim, with a kitchen knife.

Police said Lepcha suspected Ati was in a relationship with one of his friends.

The argument escalated and Lepcha grabbed a kitchen knife and attacked her.

Police arrived after receiving an alert and arrested Lepcha.

Bellandur police have registered a case under Section 103 (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

The couple had moved to Bengaluru about a month ago. Lepcha worked as a waiter at a restaurant and Ati was a receptionist at a salon.

Gadget thefts rise at city PGs despite CCTV cameras

Police point to security lapses and surveillance gaps

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Police say PGs have become attractive targets for burglars because they house large numbers of laptops, smartphones and other expensive gadgets in a confined space. With dozens of residents often living on a single floor, thieves can make away with valuables worth several lakh rupees in a matter of minutes.

Paying guest accommodations in Bengaluru have become soft targets for burglars, with a spate of thefts involving mobile phones, laptops and cash reported despite widespread CCTV coverage.

On June 9, burglars entered CM Luxury PG in HSR Layout and fled with mobile phones, laptops, and cash.

Nandish D, an IT professional, lost a MacBook worth Rs 3.5 lakh; his roommates lost electronic gadgets. The total value of the stolen property was Rs 6.5 lakh, but the figure was reduced to Rs 4 lakh in the FIR, he told *DH*.

The incident is part of a growing trend of gadget thefts from PGs in HSR Layout, Bellandur, Marathahalli, Electronics City, Mahadevapura and Whitefield, where thousands of IT professionals and students live in shared accommodation.

Police say PGs have become attractive targets because they house a large number of expensive devices in a small space. A single floor can hold dozens of laptops, smartphones, and other gadgets worth several lakh rupees.

PGs and co-living spaces in Whitefield, a major residential hub for students and professionals. DH FILE PHOTO

"Burglars know that they can get away with valuables worth several lakhs in a matter of minutes," a senior police officer said.

Most PGs have CCTV cameras, but surveillance alone has not deterred offenders. Many establishments suffer from blind spots, poor lighting, and unrestricted access to outsiders. Suspects have been captured on camera wearing masks, caps or helmets, making identification difficult.

Frequent visitors, delivery personnel, and housekeeping staff make it easier for strangers to enter unnoticed. Many thefts have taken place in the early morning hours when residents were asleep, with burglars entering through unlocked gates, staircases or terrace access points.

Police have advised PG owners to strengthen access control, install better surveillance, and maintain records of residents and visitors. Residents have been urged to lock rooms and activate tracking features on their devices.

A senior officer from the HSR Layout police station said it was the second theft at the same PG and did not rule out an inside job.

"CCTV cameras are often installed as a formality, with many systems non-functional, poorly maintained or failing to cover critical entry and exit points. We have received more than seven cases in the last six months," the officer said.

A senior officer from Whitefield said 12 thefts had been reported, with laptops the most commonly stolen items, adding that former residents sometimes returned on the pretext of enquiring about rooms and fled with valuables from unlocked rooms.

A senior officer from Marathahalli said more than six thefts had been reported in three months; his counterpart from Bellandur said eight cases involving laptops and gadgets had been reported in six months, with stolen devices quickly moved and sold in neighbouring states.

An officer from Electronics City said male PG accommodations were more vulnerable than those housing women, as most women's PGs had safety grills and restricted access. Five theft cases had been reported in the area in six months.

Three layouts to go green as BDA plans mega plantation drive

BENGALURU, DHNS: The BDA has identified three layouts — Dr Shivaram Karanth Layout in North Bengaluru, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout in the west, and Banashankari 6th Stage in the south — for a mega plantation drive that aims to plant 15 lakh saplings in a single day.

Notably, the eastern part of the city, which has a large number of unauthorised layouts, has not been included in the greening initiative. This is likely because the BDA has not developed any layouts in East Bengaluru, particularly beyond the Outer Ring Road.

To ensure the success of the drive, the authority has partnered with private developers and non-governmental organisations. While companies will contribute through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, NGOs have agreed to maintain the saplings for three years.

The saplings will be planted on June 27 — Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Jayanti.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day: S Honnamba to attend; Organised by HelpAge India; Indian Institute of World Culture, BP Wadia Road, Basavanagudi; 10 am.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day: Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh, CV Sneha, Radha S Murthy to attend; Organised by Bengaluru City Police; City Police Commissioner's Office, Infantry Road; 11 am.

CULTURAL

Play: 'Sri Krishna Vijaya'; Kuppuswamy, ST Krishnappa to attend; Organised by Lalbagh Sri Vinayaka Drama Scenery; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 10.30 am.

Play: 'Saragu' by Maruthesha Kasapura; Organised by Aayama; Kalagrama, Mallathahalli; 7.15 pm.

RELIGIOUS

Sermon: 'Valmiki Ramayana Haagu Sundarakandada Sookshmavalokana' by Ramachandramurthy; Organised by Ragigudda Sri Prasanna A; 6.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Generally cloudy sky with light rain

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	29.5°C
Minimum	20.9°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	96%
Sunset (June 15)	6:46 pm
Sunrise (June 16)	5:53 am
Moonrise	4:40 am
Moonset	6:07 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

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NOTICE INVITING RFP FOR PROCUREMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS OF DIGITAL MEDICAL E-BOOK COLLECTION FOR SHILLONG MEDICAL COLLEGE

Dated: Shillong the 12th June 2026

SMCMS-05/2026/e-Books/07: The Shillong Medical College Management Society, vide NIT Reference No. **SMCMS-05/2026/e-Books/05**: dated 12th June 2026, invites Request for Proposal (RFP) from eligible and qualified bidders for procurement and institutional access of Digital Medical E-Book Collection for Shillong Medical College, Shillong, located at Pasteur Hills, Lawmali, Shillong.

Interested bidders may obtain the detailed RFP document from the official website: **https://meghealth.gov.in/.**

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Sd/- **Member Secretary**
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Stop Bidadi land acquisition: Vijayendra in letter to Rahul

BENGALURU, DHNS

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra on Sunday wrote to top Congress leader and leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, to advise the Congress government in the state to stop the land acquisition in Bidadi for the township project.

He explained that the project was estimated to cost Rs 18,000 crore and was being projected as another central business district. The final notification for land acquisition was officially published in the state gazette on June 11.

Noting that he was speaking on behalf of "thousands of deprived and unfortunate families in Bidadi," Vijayendra said he hoped that Rahul would respond with the "fairness this moment demands".

He noted that the Congress government in Karnataka was pushing ahead with a "work-live-play" satellite township spread across 7,481 acres of land between Bidadi and Harohalli. "You travel (across) the country raising the banner of land rights for farmers. You speak of protecting India's soil from the grip of corporate interests, and you have led yatras built around precisely this cause. Yet in Karnataka, the Congress chief minister continues unmoved, even as some of our state's poorest farmers are pushed to the brink of losing everything they own".

Bidadi township real estate scheme of govt, says HDK

MANDYA, DHNS: Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy has described Bidadi township as "real estate scheme" of the state government.

"The CM himself is running the business with the real estate mafia. Most of the farmers are not ready to give up their land. They are threatening the farmers with the help of police and rowdies. The government itself is working as a real estate agent," Kumaraswamy said. He was speaking to reporters here on Sunday.

The former CM said that previously, BMICP authority was formed with D K Shivakumar as its chairman. It issued a notification to acquire 1.75 lakh acres of land on the Bengaluru-Mysuru road for roads and townships. "What happened to that project in the last 30 years?" he sought to know.

Gruha Lakshmi, Gruha Jyothi won't be discontinued: DKS

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Gruha Lakshmi and Gruha Jyothi guarantee schemes will not be discontinued, affirmed Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday.

"Gruha Lakshmi and Gruha Jyothi schemes are the pride of the Congress government. They will not be discontinued under any circumstances. The public should not listen to false news being spread by opposition parties in this regard," the CM said in a statement.

"Some people have been creating fake records in the names of deceased individuals and are availing the benefits of the schemes. Therefore, beneficiaries have been asked to reapply so that their name, address, and account number can be verified and authenticated for the guarantee schemes. There is nothing more to it," he said.

Escoms resolved 2 cr plaints in 3 yrs; power cut tops woes

Consumers flag issues with helpline 1912

ARUNKUMAR HURALIMATH
HUBBALLI, DHNS

The state's electricity supply companies (escoms) collectively handled over two crore consumer complaints in the past three years, with power supply interruptions emerging as the single largest grievance across urban and rural regions.

Data from Bescom (Bengaluru), Hescom (Hubballi), Mescom (Mangaluru), Cesc (Mysuru) and Gescom (Kalaburagi) shows complaints on outages, line faults and transformer failures accounted for the overwhelming majority of consumer calls to utility helpline (1912), highlighting persistent challenges in distribution network.

An officer said, there were different numbers for helplines in all escoms 2 years ago. Later, they came up with a single number 1912, where consumers can register complaints on power outage, line faults, transformer failures, billing, etc. They will address complaints on priority basis and it may take 24-72 hours to resolve transformer failures.

In all escoms, 90% of complaints are related to power outages, not bill issues or others. The number of complaints is significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural parts.

For Jan 2023-Mar 2026, Bescom received 1.37 crore calls from consumers, while Hescom recorded 29.49 lakh calls, Mescom 21.31 lakh, Cesc 9.8 lakh and Gescom 8.09 lakh calls. In total, 2.06 crore calls were recorded.

As per data, all escoms have addressed all complaints in a timely manner, and there are not many pending complaints, except around 2,000 registered in last one month.

While complaints have risen in Bescom by 15%, Cesc by 85% and Gescom by 34%, the number dropped at Hescom by 67% and Mescom by 12%.

Hescom officials said earlier they used to register power outage calls as complaints, but now they are registering them as queries. If there are issues in a particular area on power outage or other things, they register them and send a complaint number to consumers.

According to Bescom, they get more calls following the growing number of consumers, EV charging load, new apartment complexes and huge population area of Bescom from Bengaluru to Davangere.

Hescom managing director Vyshali M L said they recieve more complaints on power supply interruptions during rainy season. If a line gets damaged, many people in the area call customer care. Hence, there are more complaints on one problem. They get more complaints from Uttara Kannada district under Hescom jurisdiction, where rainfall is high and there are more trees.

Mangaluru-based consumer activist Hanumanth Kamath said power-supply companies cut power even before monsoon begins, leading to inconvenience for consumers and people keep calling customer care.

If any line gets affected due to rain, power supply automatically gets disconnected and it won't lead to damage to life and property. Hence, power-supply companies should not cut power unnecessarily, he said.

"When we call 1912, it is always busy, and it's very difficult to get through. Several times we keep phone numbers of local officials like section officers and assistant executive engineers. We inform them about the problem. Escoms need to address the problem of inability to get calls through to 1912. Higher officials should keep track of complaints," he said.

Bescom officials restore a snapped electricity line, that had cut off power to nearly 6,000 households at Chikkabanavara near Bengaluru. Bescom gets the highest number of complaint calls from consumers on the helpline. DH FILE PHOTO

After a prolonged break, rains return to coastal dists

People take shelter from rain under umbrellas as monsoon gains steam after a week-long break, in Udupi on Sunday. DH PHOTO

After an underwhelming start, southwest monsoon gained vigour in coastal Karnataka on Sunday with Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts experiencing heavy showers, coupled with thunder.

Many parts of Udupi, including the temple town, Brahmavar, Kundapur, Baindoor, Hebri and Kaup received heavy rains overnight. Rains continued intermittently till Sunday afternoon. Many roads and low-lying areas in Udupi town reported waterlogging.

Kaup recorded 57 mm of rain in the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Sunday. Udupi registered 53 mm while Baindoor and Kundapur witnessed 38 mm and 36 mm of rains, respectively.

Mangaluru city and surrounding areas also experienced heavy showers intermittently on Sunday.

Down south, Ramanagara town received a sharp spell of rain in the evening.

EDUCATION CORNER

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Please contact without fail any of the following volunteers & register immediately.

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Our client is desirous of purchasing the property bearing Apartment **No. L-18, on 18th Floor of NIWA** of **KESSAKU**, being built on property bearing Municipal No.1, situated at Dr.Rajkumar Road, Industrial Suburb, Rajajinagar, and the apartment is measuring **4860.59 Sq feet of Carpet Area** and exclusive balcony/deck area measuring **1121.40 Sq ft** and exclusive Varandah/personal lobby appurtenant to the apartment measuring **122.30 Sq ft** totally measuring **8350 Sq feet of super built up area**, along with right to use **4 covered car parking spaces** in basement levels 1/2/3, which is more fully described in the schedule hereunder and hereinafter referred to as "Schedule Property" from its present owner **Mrs.Radhika Yathin W/o Yathin Sabapathy**;
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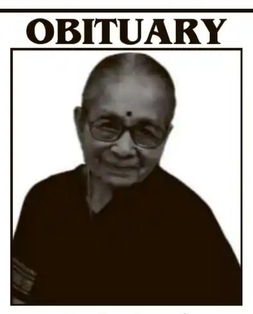


Lakshmi Kalyanasundaram
(20.02.1928 – 12.06.2026)

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Lakshmi Kalyanasundaram, mother of Kala Gopalakrishnan, Gita Sen and Revathi Narayanan. She was a dedicated volunteer teacher to children with special needs, a great lover of classical music, a culinary genius and a beloved matriarch. Her positivity, kindness, charm and authenticity touched people in many walks of life.
She was much loved and will be dearly missed by her family and friends.
Contact: 9886428443

3 B'luru youths washed away in Hassan stream

HASSAN, DHNS: Three youths from Bengaluru were washed away when they went for a swim at a stream near Shettihalli Rosary Church in Hassan district on Sunday.

A 10-member group of youths from Girinagar and Byatarayanapura in Bengaluru had visited Dharmasthala.

While returning, they visited the Rosary Church in Shettihalli. Later, they went for a swim in the nearby stream.

Manikanta (20), Milan Gowda (23) and Charan (20), were washed away. Police and Fire and Emergency Services personnel visited the spot and launched a search.

While the body of Manikanta has been retrieved, search is on for the others, according to Goruru Police.

FM TRANSMITS WELFARE VIBES

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacts with vegetable vendors, regarding various central government initiatives supporting street vendors and self-employment, near Mysore Bank Circle in Bengaluru on Sunday. Earlier, the Finance Minister took part in a cleanliness drive with BJP workers and leaders. DH PHOTO

Iskcon releases Kannada Mahakavya on Srila Prabhupada

BENGALURU, DHNS: Iskcon Bengaluru on Sunday unveiled 'Srila Prabhupada Charitamrtam', the first Kannada Mahakavya chronicling the life and legacy of AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

Penned by noted poet Kabbinale Vasanta Bharadwaj, the work is composed in the rare Ashtadashapadi Gitamala metre and presented in traditional Gamaka style.

Speaking at the launch, Isapriya Tirtha Swami of Adamaru Mutt urged people from all walks of life to read the poem, highlighting Prabhupada's global outreach through Harinama Sankirtana, book distribution and humanitarian relief programmes. Educationist Gururaj Karajagi underscored the literary and spiritual significance of the work.

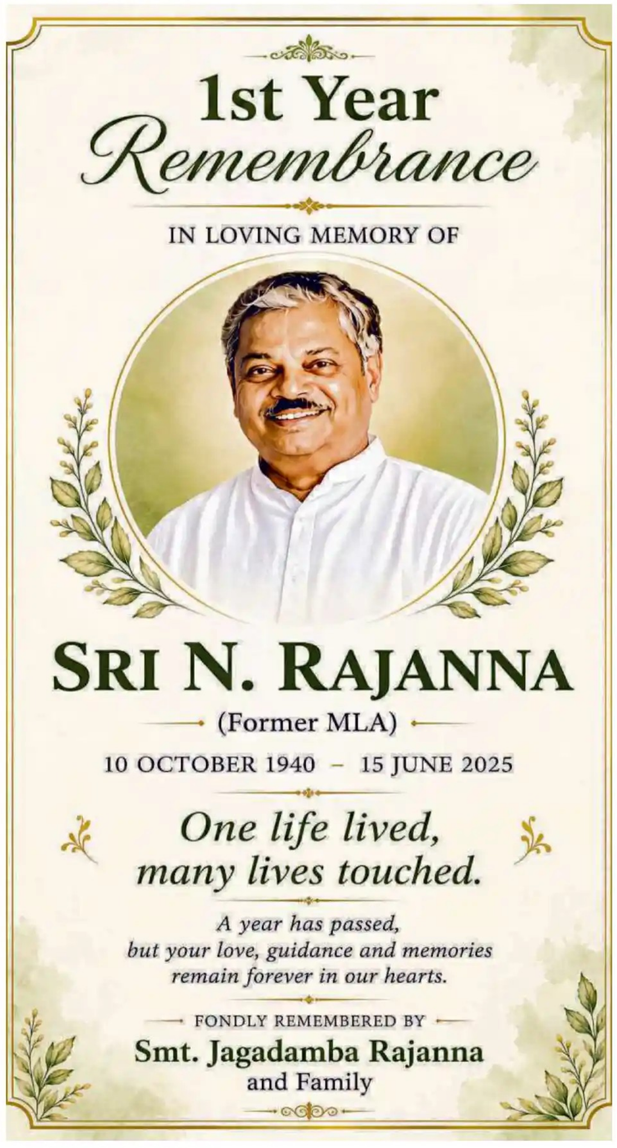
Organisers said the book traces Prabhupada's journey from Kolkata to the West, where he founded Iskcon.

Food Safety dept raids outlets, e-comm warehouses

BENGALURU, DHNS: Officials of the Food Safety Department raided 236 food outlets, grocery stores, and e-commerce food warehouses across Bengaluru on Friday and Saturday.

During the inspections, 44 cases were registered for violations such as the sale of expired products and misbranding, while 65 notices were issued to Food Business Operators (FBOs). Another 30 establishments were found closed or untraceable, officials said. The department collected Rs 1.97 lakh in penalties and challans and seized expired food products worth Rs 2.35 lakh.

Officials said designated officers from across the state were deputed for the raids.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With waste-to-charcoal plant, twin cities on solid ground in trash mgmt

MANJUNATH HEGDE BOMNALLI
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Karnataka's first municipal solid waste-to-torrefied charcoal production plant being set up by a public sector enterprise here has completed trial run by operating continuously for 36 hours. Its full-fledged commissioning is expected by the end of this year.

NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVN), a subsidiary of National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC), has built the plant on 12 acres of land provided by Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation (HDMC) near Gabbur on the city's outskirts.

Seen as a major solution for management of dry waste generated in the twin cities, the plant, which converts combustible dry waste into torrefied charcoal, has a capacity of 200 tonnes per day.

The torrefied charcoal plant is the first such facility in Karnataka, said NVVN deputy general manager Rajeev Bhatia, while a plant is already functioning in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, and similar projects are underway in a few other places.

An inside view of NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited's dry waste-to-torrefied charcoal plant near Gabbur on the outskirts of Hubballi city. PHOTO COURTESY/HDMC

"A 36-hour continuous trial run of the reactor has been completed successfully, and around 250 tonnes of torrefied charcoal has already been produced in different phases of testing. After completing the next phases of trials, testing and other procedures, full-fledged commissioning for commercial operations will take place in five to six months," Bhatia said, adding that the total cost of the project was Rs 200 crore.

The yield of the torrefaction process (heating combustible dry waste in low-oxygen environment) is 30% to 35%, and the torrefied charcoal produced here will be used at NTPC's thermal power plant at Kudagi in Vijayapura district, he said.

Hubballi-Dharwad, the second-largest city in the state, generates around 450 tonnes of waste per day, including up to 220 tonnes of dry waste. Along with combustible dry waste, HDMC will supply 25,000 litres of treated water per day to the NVVN plant from the sewage treatment plant at Gabbur.

"Proper treatment of dry waste is the biggest benefit this plant offers to the twin cities, as dry waste piling up at garbage dump yards poses environmental hazards," said HDMC commissioner Rudresh Ghali.

At present, a portion of the dry waste collected by HDMC is sorted and sold by rag-pickers, while recyclers also collect it after segregation. Cement factories sometimes use it for refuse-derived fuel. The remaining waste is sent to garbage dump yards, according to HDMC executive engineer (solid waste management) Santoshkumar Yarangali.

From wet waste, HDMC has been producing compost at windrow plants in garbage yards.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited to set up a facility for generating compressed bio gas at Shivalli, which is expected to be ready in two years.

CJP founder slams 'communal politics'...

CJP, from Page 1

The protest in Karnataka capital follows similar protests in Delhi, Pune, Amritsar and Hyderabad. Around 600 protestors, mostly youngsters in their late teens and twenties, gathered for the protest amid heavy rainfall.

The protest had a strong presence of left-wing student organisations like AISA, AISF, SFI, AIDSO and so on. The protesters raised slogans like "Inquilab Zindabad", "Jai Bhim", "No more lies, no more delay, Dharmendra Pradhan resign today" and "Chowkidar chor hein".

Dipke rued that students who should've become doctors and saved the lives of others had to give up their own life.

"When we expose this failed system, we are called cockroaches, Pakistanis, anti-nationals... A 17-year-old school student was called (a) Pakistani. They called me a Pakistani.. They call you, the media, Pakistanis. I want to ask, who is Indian? Is it only the BJP IT Cell?"

Addressing the protesters, actor and activist Prakash Raj said the younger generation was not in favour of "Mandir-Masjid" politics.

Slamming Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Raj said: "I wish our educated prime minister understood us. He has a masters in politics. He must have struggled writing exams, must have seen the politics of exams, must know the style of exam paper leakage... Why are you a silent educated prime minister?"

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was also present on the occasion, sought accountability not just in the education sector but in different sectors of governance as well.

"Since this government came to power, they started this paradigm — Hindu-Muslim. Every election, every year, they try to divide us using Hindu-Muslim narrative. Now, what has that led us to? It's because of this narrative that people have stopped thinking of themselves as citizens. The first thing they think of themselves is either as a Muslim or as a Hindu. Now, we need to remember we are firstly and lastly Indians," he said.

On the sidelines, around 100 members in support of the ruling BJP conducted their own protest against the CJP.

The CJP, which is next expected to hold similar protests in different major cities, has given a deadline of June 20 for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to resign. If not, they have claimed to initiate an indefinite protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar.

60% of ICT labs in govt schools non-functional, reveals data

Lack of trained teachers, poor connectivity cited as reasons

SHRINIDHI R
DHARWAD, DHNS

As much as 60% of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) labs in government schools are non-functional, according to the data from the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE).

While the private schools are gearing up to introduce subjects such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science in middle and high schools, a large number of government schools are grappling with poor or non-functional ICT labs.

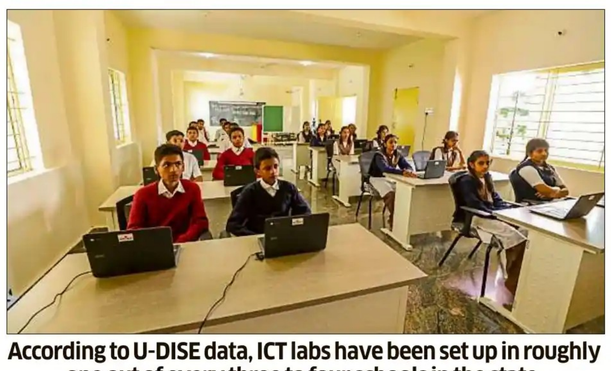
This gap has significantly impacted students from government schools in opting for science at the Pre-University (PU) level. According to data from the Department of School Education and Literacy, only 38% of students from government schools choose science in PU, while a majority gravitate towards arts, ITI or commerce streams.

The Samagra Shikshana Karnataka (SSK) and the Department of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT), which oversee the establishment of school laboratories, are facing challenges such as fund constraints, space limitations, and a shortage of trained teachers.

With an increasing emphasis on experiential learning, the lack of functional infrastructure has emerged as a major concern.

According to U-DISE data, ICT labs have been set up in roughly one out of every three to four schools in the state. However, functionality remains a concern. In Bagalkot, 169 ICT labs have been established, of which only 94 are functional. Ballari has 211 labs with 107 operational, while Belagavi has 161 labs, of which 101 are working.

In Bengaluru — India's IT capital — North and South zones together have 174 labs, but only 89 are functional. Dharwad, considered the education hub of North Karnataka, has 131 labs, of which just 56 are operational. Raichur has 191 labs, with only 86 functional.



According to U-DISE data, ICT labs have been set up in roughly one out of every three to four schools in the state.

In contrast, districts like Udupi and Mangaluru report nearly 90% functionality of ICT labs.

Students and teachers attribute the poor condition of ICT labs to lack of access to computers, unreliable internet connectivity, and a shortage of trained instructors.

Officials in the department said that out of approximately 43,000 schools in the state, only about 6,000 have computer labs, many of which lack functional equipment.

Education activist Shashikala Meti, who launched the 'Save Government Schools' campaign, said that in Dharwad district alone, around 40% of schools lack laboratories or teachers for core subjects.

DSERT Joint Director Jagadeeshwara B S said efforts are underway to address the issue. "Atal Tinkering Labs are being established to provide specialised lab facilities. Over 600 such labs have been set up in the last three years, and the process is ongoing," he said.

The department is also collaborating with NGOs and industries to mobilise CSR funding for setting up labs.

The Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM), which has been working for over two decades to promote scientific temperament among students, has introduced mobile science labs that visit government schools. It has also set up a Science Park in HD Kote (Mysuru district) and a Physics Park at a government school in Benachi near Dharwad, said regional head Jayant K S.

Similarly, the Agastya Foundation continues to support government schools by providing science infrastructure, organising science expos, and conducting competitions to encourage students to pursue science.

Officials from SSK said the "i-Code Labs" initiative, launched in 2025–26, focuses on building core computer skills, including coding and logical thinking.

Additionally, the government is strengthening ICT facilities by supplying laptops, UPS batteries, and computers, particularly in taluk and district headquarters.

Under the Technology Assisted Learning Programme (TALP), ICT integration is being expanded across Classes I to XII, with provisions for laptops, tablets, and interactive learning tools. The initiative is being implemented through a 'hub-and-spoke' model, currently comprising 63 hubs and 756 spoke schools, with plans for further expansion.

Amid Anthropic move, India & France stress inclusive AI

India-France, From Page 1

The French president, too, called for greater cooperation between his country and India in the development of AI.

He subtly referred to the move by President Donald Trump's administration to restrict access to some of the most advanced AI models of Anthropic.

"We have recently noticed a growing tendency to restrict access to AI models and to use advances in AI to stop technology cooperation between nations. But France and India believe in true partnership in cooperative AI," Macron said at the launch of Bharat Innovates.

The remarks by Modi and Macron came two days after the Trump Administration cited national security concerns and issued an export control directive asking Anthropic, based in San Francisco, to suspend all access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 by any foreign national, both inside and outside the US, including foreign nationals among the employees of the company itself. Anthropic complied with the US government's order by disabling Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for all its customers.

The move underlined concerns over the concentration of cutting-edge AI capabilities among a small number of firms.

The US restrictions also underlined concerns that access to frontier AI technologies could be increasingly shaped by geopolitical considerations and that countries lagging in developing their own capabilities risk dependence on decisions taken by others, officials in New Delhi said, explaining the need for greater India-France cooperation in AI.

France has also been championing European alternatives such as MistralAI as part of efforts to build a more diversified AI ecosystem.

Forest dept to recover Rs 400-cr land...

Forest dept, From Page 1

On the other hand, a single bench of the high court ordered the forest department to renew the lease, but after the department filed a writ appeal, the court allowed it to "consider the request for renewal and if the renewal is not possible, reject the same without further delay".

Between 2010 and 2013, the government decided not to renew the lease and directed the department to recover the forest land along with the pending lease rent of Rs 1.17 crore. The society neither paid the money nor vacated the space. However, no action was taken to recover the land.

"Most of those occupying the land are rich farmers with influence. Political pressure and a tendency of bureaucracy to steer clear of tough decisions means the file was not opened again for two decades," an official, who didn't want to be named, said.

Finally, in January 2026, the department remembered its own law and issued an eviction notice under Section 64A of the Karnataka Forest Act. The chief executive officer of the society filed an appeal before the Chief Conservator of Forests in February.

In his order rejecting the appeal, CCF T Heeralal pointed to the Supreme Court order barring use of forest land for non-forest purposes as well as a landmark order in December 2025 which ordered the state government to recover 134 acre of forest land leased for agricultural purposes.

The order not only held the society's claim to the land untenable, but noted that the land is ecologically sensitive. He pointed to the materials produced by Banavasi Range Forest Officer on regular wildlife movement, especially elephant sightings, in the area.

The order asked the society to immediately vacate the land. "The encroacher shall remove, at his own cost, any house, structures, crops, or other improvements existing on the said land," it added.

To a question, Sirsi DCF Sandip Suryawanshi told *DH* that he has received CCF's order. "We will take possession of the land soon after giving due time to the occupants to vacate the land as per the law," he said.

State looks for ways to fund...

Homebuyers, from Page 1

They also pointed out that eligible beneficiaries are not able to secure their share despite the state government increasing its contribution to Rs 5 lakh.

According to the concept note circulated at the meeting, the corporation has suggested an additional buyer stamp duty on second homes, noting that about 65,000 houses were sold in 2024 and around a quarter of the buyers owned more than one home. The note mentioned that similar measures are in place in countries such as Singapore and the United Kingdom.

The note also proposes progressive stamp duty slab rates, besides levying additional stamp duty on houses purchased by overseas and NRI buyers. It estimates that 30-35% of housing investments in Bengaluru are by NRIs.

Other revenue augmentation measures under consideration include charging premiums on development projects availing additional Floor Space Index (FSI), levying a shelter fee on large private housing projects and imposing a slum cess.

The concept note draws from similar housing funds elsewhere in India. It cites Maharashtra's Niwara Nidhi, which supplements the state's contribution to affordable housing schemes through premiums collected by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority and the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority.

Tamil Nadu's Shelter Fund is another example. Operated by the Housing and Urban Development Department, the fund pools proceeds from government levies and fees to support affordable housing projects.

Suresh Hari, a governing council member of CREDAI Karnataka, said builders would welcome the proposal provided it was a win-win for all.

Monsoon likely to enter sluggish phase: IMD

Monsoon, from Page 1

Bidar, the northeastern most district, has received only sporadic rainfall. In other parts of north interior Karnataka, no cloud formation has been reported, except for rainfall at one or two places.

In the southern interior Karnataka, rainfall has been scattered, covering mainly Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts, Ramanagara, Kolar, Chikkaballapur and Tumakuru. In coastal Karnataka, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi has received rainfall, but Uttara Kannada saw only isolated rainfall, Puviarasan said.

"The conditions are favourable, but the progress of the monsoon is not uniform. The rainfall could decrease over the next few days as a trough running at 3.1-4.5 kmph above the mean sea level will disappear," he told *DH*.

Bengaluru has received widespread to fairly widespread rainfall in the last few days.

Teacher couple killed in accident

▸ **VIJAYAPURA, DHNS:** A teacher couple from the district were killed after a speeding lorry rammed into their bike near Toravi on the outskirts of Vijayapura on Sunday. The deceased are Ambavva Pujeri (34), a GPT teacher at Khatijapur HPS School in the taluk, and her husband Guruling Hunshyal, a teacher at Chanakya Career Academy. The couple is survived by two children.

Class 1 student dies in school

▸ **TUMARI (SHIVAMOGGA DISTRICT), DHNS:** A 6-year-old boy reportedly died of heart attack at Government Higher Primary School at Haalasasi (Karur hobli) in Sagar taluk, Shivamogga district, on Saturday afternoon.

Trilok Jain, son of couple Gautam Jain and Shilpa of Kodanavalli, is the deceased.

Trilok, a student of class 1, all of a sudden collapsed on the school premises. Though he was rushed to a hospital, he breathed his last en route.

Rebel TMC MPs announce...

TMC, From Page 1

While Dastidar claimed 20 MPs signed the letter, sources in the Speaker's Office put the number at 19.

"We have also told the Speaker that we are merging with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India. Moving forward, we will work for the nation and collaborate with the NDA under the leadership of the prime minister," she said.

Senior MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay, who was the Trinamool's Lok Sabha leader before Abhishek took over, spoke about the future plans of the rebels, who are likely to claim the party and symbol.

"When you leave with two-thirds of the party, you cannot demand the name of that party on the first day itself," he said, claiming that, in July, they will make a demand to provide them the status of "real" Trinamool.

"It will be decided in the court which one the real TMC is," he said.

Since the Trinamool's electoral debacle in the Assembly polls, rebellion has been brewing in the party over the power wielded by Abhishek, who is also Mamata's nephew and heir apparent. A number of MPs and MLAs came out in open against him while insisting that they recognise Mamata as their leader but refused to accept Abhishek's leadership.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Rainfall occurred at most places over Coastal Karnataka & at a few places over Interior Karnataka.
Forecast June 15: Generally cloudy sky. Heavy rain/ thundershowers likely at one or two places.

INTERIOR NORTH			
Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	32.6	23.0	0.0
Bidar	36.0	22.8	3.4
Vijayapura	36.0	23.2	0.0
Dharwad	33.2	22.8	0.0
Haveri	29.8	23.6	0.0
Kalaburagi	38.0	22.2	5.2
Raichur	38.0	21.0	22.8
COASTAL			
Honnavar	31.6	27.2	0.5
Karwar	33.4	28.2	45.7
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	29.0	23.1	27.8

INTERIOR SOUTH			
Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	27.1	22.5	41.5
Bengaluru	29.2	20.9	5.2
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	32.0	23.9	0.4
Davangere	33.0	22.3	0.0
Hassan	--	--	--
Mysuru	31.8	21.2	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	30.4	19.6	4.2
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	36.0	25.0	NIL
Kolkata	34.0	28.0	NIL
Mumbai	34.0	29.0	NA
Chennai	36.0	28.0	NA
Pune	33.0	24.0	NA
Hyderabad	35.0	26.0	NA
Th'puram	30.0	27.0	NIL

ಕಲಬುರಗಿ–ಬೀದರ ಹಾಗೂ ಯಾದಗಿರ ಸಹಕಾರ ಹಾಲು ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರ ಸಂಘಗಳ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ ನಿಯಮಿತ
ಹುಮನಾಬಾದ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಕಲಬುರಗಿ–585104

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕಬಿಯಾಹಾಒ/ಆಡಳಿತ/ನೇಮಕಾತಿ/2026–27/336 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 14.06.2026

ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಕಲಬುರಗಿ–ಬೀದರ ಹಾಗೂ ಯಾದಗಿರ ಸಹಕಾರ ಹಾಲು ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರ ಸಂಘಗಳ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ ನಿಯಮಿತ, ಕಲಬುರಗಿ ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ವಿವಿಧ ವೃಂದದಲ್ಲಿ ಖಾಲಿ ಇರುವ 50 ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕಬಿಯಾಹಾಒ/ ಆಡಳಿತ/ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ/269/2026–27, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 27.05.2026 ಮತ್ತು 05 ಬ್ಯಾಕಲಾಗ ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕಬಿಯಾಹಾಒ/ ಆಡಳಿತ/ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ/270/2026–27, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 27.05.2026ರ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯನ್ನು ಆಡಳಿತಾತ್ಮಕ ಕಾರಣಗಳಿಂದ ಹಿಂಪಡೆಯಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಸಹಿ/– ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು,
ಕಲಬುರಗಿ–ಬೀದರ ಹಾಗೂ
ಯಾದಗಿರ ಹಾಲು ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ ನಿ.

Office Of The Commissioner Hindu Religious Institutions And Charitable Endowments Department
Commissioner's Office, 4th Floor, Minto Sri Anjaneya Bhawan, Aluru Venkatarao Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore-18,
Tel: 26709689/ 26706775, Email: endowmentcommissioner@gmail.com.

No HRICE-CDMS0CD/9/2026- 2184090 Date:12.06.2026

PRESS NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from the pilgrims who have undertaken the Kailasa Manasa Sarovara for the first time from Karnataka State in the year 2026-27 for the Government subsidy of **Rs.30,000/- (Rs. Thirty thousand only)** per pilgrim, from **11.06.2026.**

ELIGIBILITY

(1) The pilgrim should be a permanent resident of Karnataka State.
(2) Last for the submission of application is **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m.**
(3) As per the availability of funds, subsidy will be allotted as per Government guidelines.
(4) It is mandatory for the pilgrim to apply online only at Sindu web portal **(https://sevasindhuservices.karnataka.gov.in)** on **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m.**

	Documents mandatory for uploading the application
1.	One photograph (Passport size)
2.	Voter ID/ Ration Card/Passport/Driving License
3.	The Pilgrim should upload a self attestation stating that he has not received any subsidy in the past on **Rs.100/- e-stamp paper** with notary seal and signature
4.	If Pilgrimage taken through Central Government route, certificate issued from Central Government should be submitted
5.	If Pilgrimage taken through Nepal/Tibet route, copy of C.I.P.S.C issued from Lhasa, Government of China should be submitted
6.	Group Visa **(Full list)**
7.	Copy of first and last pages of Passport and colour xerox of the page with seal.

:Note:
(1) Further details may be obtained by visiting the official website of the department at https://itms.kar.in
(2) Pilgrims after submitting their application must refer to their login to check the progress of their application.
(3) Before the submission of application, the pilgrim should have a valid bank account, Aadhar card and seed and NPCI should be activated for the said bank account without fail. (as per the Government guidelines, since grants are to be distributed in the of same year, if the Aadhar card and Seed and NPCI are not activated in the bank without fail within the specified date, the pilgrim himself is responsible for it).
(4) Applications for subsidy submitted after the expiry of due date will not be considered.

Sd/-
For Commissioner,
Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment department,
Chamarajpet, Bangalore.

DIPR/CP/1134/Shirdi Sai/2026-27

Office Of The Commissioner Hindu Religious Institutions And Charitable Endowments
4th Floor Minto Sri Anjaneya Bhawan, Aluru Venkatarao Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore-18, Tel: 26709689/ 26706775,
Email: endowmentcommissioner@gmail.com.

No. HRICE-CDMS0CD/9/2026- 2184090 Date:12.06.2026

PRESS RELEASE

Applications are invited from the pilgrims who have undertaken the Char Dham Yatra for the first time from Karnataka State in the year 2026-27 for the Government subsidy of Rs.20,000/- (Rs. Twenty thousand only) per pilgrim, from 11.06.2026.

ELIGIBILITY

(1) The pilgrim should be a permanent resident of Karnataka State.
(2) Only Pilgrims above 45 years of age may apply.
(3) It is mandatory for the pilgrim to have visited Badrinath, KedarnathYamunothri and Gangothri.
(4) Last for the submission of application is **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m**
(5) The subsidy will be allotted as per the availability of funds as per Government guidelines .
(6) It is mandatory for the pilgrim to apply online only at Sindu web portal **(https://sevasindhuservices.karnataka.gov.in)**on **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m.**

	Documents mandatory for uploading the application
1.	One photograph (passport size)
2.	Voter ID/ Ration Card/Passport/Driving License
3.	The Pilgrim should upload a self attestation on **Rs.100/- e-**stamp paper with notary seal and signature, stating that he has not received any subsidy in the past
4.	Copy of registration for the pilgrimage before embarking on the pilgrimage.
5.	Certificate issued by the Uttarakhand Tourism Department after the completion of the pilgrimage **(mandatory 4 dhams be Listed)**

NOTE:(1) Further details may be obtained by visiting the official website of the department at https://itms.kar.in
(2) Pilgrims after submitting their application must refer to their login to check the progress of their application.
(3) Before the submission of application, the pilgrim should have a valid bank account, Aadhar card and seed and NPCI should be activated for the said bank account without fail. (as per the Government guidelines, since grants are to be distributed in the of same year, if the Aadhar card and Seed and NPCI are not activated in the bank without fail within the specified date, the pilgrim himself is responsible for it)
(4) Applications for subsidy submitted after the expiry of due date will not be considered.

Sd/-
for Commissioner,
Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment department,
Chamarajpet, Bangalore.

DIPR/CP/1135/SSC/2026-27

Office of the Commissioner for Hindu Religious Institutions & Charitable Endowments
4th Floor, Minto Sri Anjaneya Bhawan, Aluru Venkatarao Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore-18, Tel: 26709689/ 26706775,
Email: endowmentcommissioner@gmail.com.

No HRICE-CDMS0CD/9/2026- 2184090 Date: 12.06.2026

PRESS RELEASE

Applications are invited from the pilgrims who have undertaken Kashi yatre for the first time, dated 01.11.2025 onwards, from Karnataka State for the year 2026-27, Government subsidy of Rs.5,000/- (Rs. Five thousand only) per pilgrim will be allotted for 30,000 pilgrims, starting from 11.06.2026.

ELIGIBILITY:

1. The pilgrim should be a permanent resident of Karnataka State.
2. Only Pilgrims above 18 years of age may apply.
3. Last for the submission of application is **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m.**
4. Eligible pilgrims must upload their applications online through Seva Sindhu web portal **(https://sevasindhuservices.karnataka.gov.in)** on or before **15.11.2026 before 5.30 p.m**

	Documents mandatory for uploading the application
1	One photograph (Passport size)
2	Voter ID/ Ration Card/Passport/Driving License
3	Pilgrims should upload the ticket for travelling to Kashi.
4	The Pilgrim should upload a photograph taken in front of Kashi Vishwanatha temple pilgrim's (Photo)/ GPS location to confirm having taken kashi pilgrimage
5	After Pilgrim having paid subsidy once, the same pilgrim will not be paid again. The Pilgrim should upload a self attestation stating that he has not received any subsidy in the past on Rs.100/- e-stamp paper with notary seal and signature

Note: 1. Further details may be obtained by visiting the official website of the department at **https://itms.kar.in**
2. Pilgrims after submitting their application must refer to their login to check the progress of their application.
3. Before the submission of application, the pilgrim should have a valid bank account, Aadhar card and seed and NPCI should be activated for the said bank account without fail. (as per the Government guidelines, since grants are to be distributed in the of same year, if the Aadhar card and Seed and NPCI are not activated in the bank without fail within the specified date, the pilgrim himself is responsible for it)
4. Applications for subsidy submitted after the expiry of due date will not be considered.

Sd/-
for Commissioner,
Hindu Religious Institutions
and Charitable Endowment department,
Chamarajpet, Bangalore

DIPR/CP/1133/SSC/2026-27

DECCAN HERALD
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Nomination rejected, democracy undermined

The rejection of Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha election from Madhya Pradesh, and the Supreme Court's refusal to grant her relief, raise serious questions about the fairness of the electoral process and the judiciary's ability to ensure due procedure is followed in elections. The returning officer rejected her nomination on the unconvincing ground that she had failed to disclose in her affidavit a pending criminal case against her in Hyderabad. The case itself stemmed from a complaint of inappropriate behaviour against a Congress leader, in which a corporator alleged that Meenakshi had failed to act. At the time of the incident, however, she was not the AICC in-charge of Telangana; she assumed that role much later. The court issued her a notice, to which she responded, but it has not even taken cognisance of the alleged offence. Yet her candidature was rejected. The action, as it stands, has no immediate remedy.

The returning officer's decision was arbitrary and wrong, as Section 33A (1) of the Representation of the People Act mandates disclosure only of cases carrying a punishment of two years or more, and in which charges have been framed by a court. The law is clear, yet the returning officer misinterpreted it to reject Meenakshi's candidature and declare the three BJP candidates elected, though the party had the legislative strength to elect only two. On the same day, a BJP-backed candidate in Jharkhand was given 24 hours to rectify a flaw in his affidavit. Clearly, the decision in Madhya Pradesh was politically motivated, with the Election Commission complicit in awarding the seat to the BJP. The commission's duty is to hold free and fair elections, which are basic to democracy, but it has repeatedly failed, and its actions have served to undermine democracy.

> **Yet another method of subverting the polls has been discovered with the knowledge and complicity of the Election Commission**

The Supreme Court failed to ensure democratic justice in a case where it was blatantly subverted. A bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and A S Chandurkar rejected Meenakshi's petition on the ground that it could not intervene in the election process once the process was set in motion. It is true that election results could be challenged only through an election petition, as per Article 329. However, the court has the authority to intervene in cases of gross violation of natural justice, as is the case here. The Madhya Pradesh election farce reveals yet another method of subverting elections has been discovered with the knowledge and complicity of the election commission.

Strong policing needs stronger safeguards

The Karnataka government's decision to establish permanent anti-rowdy squads across the state deserves unequivocal support. Organised crime has evolved beyond isolated street violence; it is now deeply intertwined with land grabbing, extortion, contract intimidation, and high-value real estate disputes. Conventional policing, often reactive after crimes are committed, is ill-equipped to tackle such networks. A dedicated intelligence-driven mechanism that continuously monitors habitual offenders is, therefore, a timely and necessary intervention. In recent years, the growing nexus between organised crime and the booming property market has made preventive policing as important as investigation and prosecution. The challenge is no longer confined to Bengaluru. Many notorious criminals first hone their skills in district towns before graduating to the lucrative world of urban crime. The explosive growth of Bengaluru's real estate sector has created enormous opportunities for musclemen recruited from across Karnataka. A statewide network of specialised squads can help disrupt this pipeline by sharing intelligence across jurisdictions, thereby nipping criminal networks in the bud before they entrench themselves.

> **The history of rowdy sheets and preventive detention laws is also a history of misuse**

Home Minister Priyank Kharge deserves credit for backing an institutional framework instead of relying on occasional crackdowns. Karnataka has witnessed successful anti-rowdy campaigns in the past, particularly during the era of Ramakrishna Hegde, when organised gangs were dealt a severe blow through strong political will and empowered policing. The current initiative seeks to institutionalise that resolve by embedding specialised anti-rowdy units at the police station and circle levels, backed by periodic reviews and accountability mechanisms.

However, enthusiasm must be tempered with caution. The history of rowdy sheets and preventive detention laws is also a history of misuse. Once an individual's name enters a rowdy sheet, the stigma can follow them for years, affecting employment prospects, travel documents, financial transactions, and social standing. Such branding should never become a tool for settling local scores or harassing petty criminals. The decision to classify someone as a habitual offender must be based on credible evidence and subjected to rigorous scrutiny, with adequate safeguards against arbitrary action. Equally important is a change in policing philosophy. The belief that 'once a rowdy, always a rowdy' serves neither justice nor society. Law enforcement must incapacitate hardened criminals, but it should also recognise genuine reform. Individuals who have demonstrably abandoned crime should not remain trapped indefinitely in police records for their past. The success of the new anti-rowdy squads will depend on maintaining this delicate balance: being uncompromising against organised crime while remaining scrupulously fair to individual rights. Strong policing and constitutional safeguards must advance together, not at the expense of each other.

CONCEPTUAL DISILLUSIONMENT

Law's identity crisis on trafficking

By drawing a distinction between trafficking and voluntary sex work, the Prajwala verdict revealed deeper problems with anti-trafficking framework

SHANTANU BRAJ CHOUBEY AND SUMIT KUMAR SINGH

Prajwala v. Union of India (2026 INSC 609) has rightly been acclaimed as a landmark decision in favour of the victims of trafficking. Much of the commentary surrounding the judgment has been on the recognition of rehabilitation, dignity, and victim-centred protection. But such readings are at risk of missing the most important aspect of the decision: beneath its directions on rehabilitation lies a deeper doctrinal critique of India's anti-trafficking framework.

The judgment reveals a situation where there are two competing notions of trafficking that have never been successfully reconciled. At one level, the law continues to approach trafficking through the lens of prostitution regulation. At another, it increasingly understands trafficking as a broader offence of exploitation. These two frameworks have different assumptions and goals, and can often result in conflicting outcomes. *Prajwala* is not just about the rights it affirms, but the uneasy questions it poses on the consistency of anti-trafficking law.

This is an apparent contradiction that can be attributed to the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956. The statute is the result of an abolitionist attitude towards prostitution as outlined in the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, which India honoured as part of the convention. The tenet was that prostitution, especially when third parties benefit from it, is exploitative.

Thus, brothel keeping, procuring, detaining persons in brothel premises for the purpose of prostitution, and living off of the proceeds of prostitution are all criminalised. Parliament inserted Sections 370 and 370A in the Indian Penal Code,1860, through the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which is now reproduced under Sections 143 and 144 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. The provision, based on the Palermo Protocol, shifted the focus from trafficking as a crime of morality to trafficking as a crime of exploitation. It involves an act, a prohibited means, and a purpose of exploitation. Recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons only becomes a crime if it is based on coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or abuse of vulnerability.

In the original 2004 *Prajwala* petition, the petitioners pointed out that the rescued persons were often treated as criminals and not victims. It recorded poor rescue techniques, poor post-rescue protection, and a lack of meaningful rehabilitation processes. In particular, it stated that without a strong system of victim protection, rescue would often be counter-productive, as victims were returning to the same circumstances of exploitation from which they were rescued.

In two decades, it was accepted by nearly all the stakeholders that there is a need for reform. The Union government repeatedly told the Supreme Court that it would enact the necessary legislation. Inter-ministerial committees were formed, draft trafficking Bills were prepared and revised in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021. There was, however, no legislation enacted as a consequence by Parliament to combat trafficking. At the same time, plans for an Organised Crime Investigation Agency with a focus on tackling trafficking networks were shelved. What was left behind were a series of statutes, schemes and institutions that worked in isolation and not unified under a single set of legislation.

The court's disdain of this situation is apparent throughout the judgment. It notes that there has been a repeated call over successive governments for a comprehensive legislation, which has never come to fruition. Through the BNS and the enlargement of the jurisdiction of National Investigation Agency (NIA), there are still loopholes regarding protection, rehabilitation, rescue plan, and institutional coordination.

These gaps are apparent when it comes to sex trafficking. The ITPA's implementation frequently fails to differentiate between trafficking victims and voluntary adult sex workers, and persons associated with the sex trade whose actions may not meet ITPA's threshold requirements of Section 143 BNS. Investigations usually target raids at brothels but recruiters, transporters, financiers and organised criminal networks remain unchecked.

It stated that human trafficking is an organised crime that is supported by complicated financial arrangements, money laundering, and multi-state networks. However, enforcement efforts are overwhelmingly focused on instances of exploitation, rather than on the systems that perpetuate the exploitation.

This critique reveals the doctrinal tension that lies at the core of the Indian anti-trafficking law. Trafficking remains an organised crime and investigation needs to be directed towards coercive networks, money flows, and criminal enterprises. In the context of prostitution, raids and rescue operations are obviously the predominant enforcement measures.

It is in this context that the court's emphasis on informed consent, individual assessment, and victim autonomy assumes greater significance. These directions are often discussed as matters of rehabilitation policy. In reality, they reflect a deeper shift in legal reasoning. The court repeatedly stresses that victims cannot be treated as passive objects of State intervention. Adult persons cannot automatically be institutionalised merely because they have been found in situations associated with commercial sexual exploitation. Meaningful inquiries must precede decisions regarding rehabilitation and restoration.

The consequences go beyond sexual exploitation for commercial gain. Today, trafficking in persons is defined as forced labour, domestic servitude, child trafficking, forced begging, cyber trafficking, and other organised trafficking. This contradiction is not addressed by *Prajwala*. Nor can it. Parliament must take up that task.

The judgment does achieve an equally important task as it reveals the conceptual disillusionment that has long lurked under the anti-trafficking legislation in India. The court's Victim Protection Plan serves as temporary scaffolding, but cannot replace legislative clarity. Strengthening enforcement efforts or the establishment of more shelter homes or better rehabilitation schemes are not the only things that will safeguard the future of anti-trafficking law in India. *Prajwala* must, therefore, not only be recalled as a rehabilitation verdict, but as a warning.

(Choubey is Faculty Convenor, Centre for Labour Law and Research (CLLR), National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi; Sumit is student co-convenor, CLLR)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

About names, Juliet was wrong

Inspired by the Bard and abridged by bureaucracy, there's a lot in my name

SURYAKUMARI DENNISON

'What's in a name?' demands Shakespeare's Juliet. I disrespectfully disagree. She does not have to endure the continuing consequences of being christened Sylvia Rebecca Suryakumari.

Sylvia came about this way. When I was born, my mother Olivia, who was as imaginative as her namesake in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, turned to the Bard for inspiration. After a spirited, rather than scholarly, search, she and my father decided on Ophelia (apparently, it matched Olivia) from Hamlet. Presumably someone (to whom I am forever indebted) apprised my parents of that hapless woman's tragic end, for Ophelia gave way to Sylvia. "Also Shakespeare," my mother would tell me triumphantly, ignoring the lack of a 'y' in Silvia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. After all, as Juliet might say, what's in a spelling? My passport has me down, inaccurately, and insultingly, as Sylia.

At least some version of the original Sylvia appears on that document. Rebecca has long since faded into oblivion. When I was filling in the requisite personal information before taking my ISC examination, the form could not accommodate my full name. I was firmly told that if I wished to finish school, it must be changed through chopping.

Thus, Rebecca was removed, and has not resurfaced these past 55 years. Neither its biblical nor literary associations (my parents admired Daphne du Maurier) could save it from untimely extinction.

Suryakumari has survived. Unfortunately, I am hardly called that by anyone who knows me well. My father did, in my childhood, but that was when he was angry. A summons to 'Suru' indicated that there was nothing to fear, while a stentorian 'Suryakumari' meant that I was in trouble. To most people I am Surya, which invites the inevitable, "But that's a man's name" from those hearing it for the first time. A friend of mine has solved the problem to her satisfaction by addressing me (more appropriately, she feels) as Chandra, which is one letter short of my husband's name.

Now what, I wonder, would Juliet have made of that? She might readily have traded surnames with Romeo (not caring if she was a Capulet or Montague), but an exchange of first names? Consider the absurdity of her exclaiming, "O Juliet, Juliet, wherefore art thou, Juliet?" and the young man declaring, "It is the east, and Romeo is the sun."

"What's in a name?" asked Juliet. "Lots in a name," I would reply!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Enforcement must match legislation for dowry to die

I refer to 'Education, empowerment fail to weaken dowry grip' (Jun 14). Despite India's literacy rate and the stringent Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the dowry system festers as a normalised transaction. Education has raised degrees, not dignity. Courtrooms outlaw it, yet drawing rooms negotiate it—with gold, cars, and cash masked as 'gifts'. The NCRB data shows over 6,500 dowry deaths annually, but conviction rates languish below 35%. The law threatens jail, but society rewards compliance. Police often reframe complaints as 'domestic disputes', while families fear stigma more than dowry. A prestige economy underlies the rot: grooms possess market value, weddings signify status, and daughters are viewed as liabilities to be 'settled'. Literacy taught us to read; it didn't unlearn entitlement. Until we shame takers as much as we pity givers, and until enforcement matches legislation, statutes alone won't cure this cultural greed.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

India should be assertive

The upcoming Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) meeting is a critical test for India's maritime leadership. With the recent US attacks targeting four vessels carrying Indian seafarers, New Delhi must boldly bypass bureaucratic red tape to address this crisis. Over 70% of global trade passes through the Indian Ocean, yet our sailors have become collateral damage in foreign blockades and regional power plays. While IORA's charter technically discourages political disputes, ensuring basic maritime security and human life is the ultimate form of regional cooperation. India must aggressively utilise its chairmanship to demand strict accountability, penalise unlawful blockades and establish an unyielding, unified regional security framework. We cannot allow our trade routes to become lawless war zones.
Vijaykumar H K, Raichur

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Most MPs and MLAs want the party to continue. It is their initiative. They want Mamata Banerjee to be the chief advisor and continue in a role similar to that of a leader. Their appeal touched me. Therefore, I decided that I can stay with them.
Sudip Bandyopadhyay, TMC MP

Politics, noun. A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage.
Ambrose Bierce

TO BE PRECISE

A week after youth protest at Jantar Mantar

IN PERSPECTIVE

The city's missing public voice

The Greater Bengaluru Authority must take the planning process to its citizens

ANJALI KAROL MOHAN

The Karnataka government has announced its intention to prepare an economic master plan for the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region (BMR), spanning 8,000 sq km across three districts. Earlier this year, the government made a similar announcement on master plans for the newly carved Greater Bengaluru Local Planning Area (686.82 sq km) and the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) Area (540.66 sq km). The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) area sits in the middle of the BDA area — think of it as the central portion of a doughnut.

A significant departure marks all three plans. Historically, the BMR has been planned through the structure plan under the BMRDA Act, 1985. The master plan, covering 1,227.48 sq km, is now split between the GBA and the BDA. The structure plan and the master plan are nested instruments, with the former providing the framework for the latter. The current structure plan is due for revision, but with the announcement of an economic master plan, its status is unclear, adding to the complexity of the split planning between the GBA and the BDA.

Notwithstanding this coordination, the planning soup is only getting messier, with the recently (re)sanctioned Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) in Bidadi, another call for a GIS-based master plan for the GBA and the announcement to launch the mobility plan. The lack of clarity among the numerous calls is confounding, while infrastructure and other developments are premised, often selectively, on the Revised Master Plan (RMP)-2015. For instance, the East Corporation is implementing a 24-metre-wide road as proposed in the RMP-2015. Should the validity of this road not be re-established 20 years after it was first proposed?

The Request for Proposals (RfP) calls for a plan that 'develops a liveable; economically and socially inclusive; environmentally sustainable and economically robust and innovative city' involving all stakeholders, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

In line with its own intention, the government should ensure a third departure: initiate and sustain a public-facing process. Three overarching evidences merit this. First, plans have and continue to be contentious on the ground that an authority-driven top-down process is against the spirit and objectives of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which mandates democratic bottom-up processes supplementing top-down mandates. Second, in the absence of a revised master plan, the past decade has seen a lot of water under the bridge. Several programmes and projects, not necessarily emanating from a comprehensive understanding of the city, are initiated, ongoing or stalled. These piecemeal interventions often emanate from a political economy or citizen demands. It is important to incorporate the immediate and wider impacts of these projects. This is where citizens' experiences become invaluable. Finally, for any plan to be successful, citizen ownership is crucial. A public process will ensure this ownership while addressing information asymmetries among stakeholders.

In ensuring a public process, the GBA should leverage the principle of subsidiarity as a practical tool. Again, the RfP requires the master plan to indicate 'Ecologically Sensitive Zones — No development Zones, including Nalas and water bodies, urban heat islands, urban flooding and pollution' (integrating climate concerns as laid out in the climate action plan). These data sources and attendant experiences are best captured at the hyper-local level through meaningful citizen engagement.

The consultant should clearly set out the intention and methods for a public-facing process that unfolds through the plan-making period, rather than merely inviting "public suggestions and objections" on a provisionally approved master plan under the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961. By then, it is too late for the public to participate. The act of nurturing participation is starkly different from eliciting suggestions and objections. It calls for active engagement — premised on ownership of the ward, the neighbourhood and the city — where the citizen agency contributes to the challenges faced as well as the desires and aspirations for a better quality of life.

This will require the GBA to take the planning process to its citizens. A wide dissemination on citizen engagement — outlining stages of participation and consultation — will help set expectations. For instance, starting with the baseline mapping, the GBA can, through councillors, take the process to wards or a cluster of wards. It must necessarily be a patient process, demanding patient capital and human resources.

Centre-staging the public in the planning process, be it the economic master plan for the region or the BDA master plan, is an emerging imperative. Bengaluru deserves a comprehensive approach to development, one that moves beyond knee-jerk reactions manifesting in isolated projects.

(The writer is an urban and regional planner, a partner at Integrated Design)

Automation to intelligence: How India's manufacturers must evolve

SANDEEP SEHGAL

The opportunities presented by smart manufacturing have moved beyond the realm of theory into reality for many countries around the world. The introduction of Industry 4.0 Lighthouse Factories has demonstrated that systems can be developed that adapt and learn without continuous human intervention. Advanced economies such as Germany, Japan, and many European nations have gone beyond merely proving these technologies can work. In some industries, there are now dark factories where very few people are needed to run fully automated production facilities.

India still has a long way to go in making the transition to advanced industrial manufacturing. Although examples of Industry 4.0 implementation exist, India has yet to develop frameworks of its own that reflect the wide range of industrial production types in the country, from very low-volume production to extremely high-volume manufacturing. The gap created by incomplete technology integration does not merely leave India behind technologically; it also represents a missed opportunity to develop Industry 4.0 models tailored specifically to Indian conditions.

To bridge this gap, continued cooperation between industry and research institutions will be essential. For example, collaborative partnerships formed by FSID CORE Labs/IISc and manufacturing companies have already begun addressing real-world challenges faced in factories. These partnerships also provide a scalable approach for adopting Industry 4.0 frameworks within Indian industry. For small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs), such partnerships are not merely a benefit; they serve as the driving force behind technology adoption.

The basis of three of the biggest changes referring to Industry 4.0 developments being realised today is the data produced from these applications. The ability to produce accurate data about manufacturing processes results in three key transformative capabilities: AI-driven process optimisation, predictive maintenance; and intelligent quality control. More accurate data results in making more accurate decisions, which, compounded, result in creating a competitive advantage.

Unfortunately, a majority of manufacturers in India are not ready to produce these digitally generated, structured, real-time manufactured good data. In order to develop the digital infrastructure needed, manufacturers need assistance from policymakers —especially in light of projected workforce shortages and increased competition from other countries around the world.

There is a risk when using digital tools that they do not create true manufacturing ability. True manufacturing competitiveness is something that exists much deeper than merely using digital tools.

In the machine tool industry, computer numerical control (CNC) machines, servo motors and advanced automation components are primarily sourced from outside India, leaving Indian firms as primarily system integrators and not as technological innovators. The West has built up these basic manufacturing capabilities over the years. Currently, India does not have the appropriate amount of intellectual property and technical experience regarding the fundamental issues in building these industrial capabilities, and until India has the appropriate level of knowledge and experience, it will not be able to develop advanced manufacturing capabilities. The issues involved with developing indigenous inspection/sensor technologies and basic core components do not just include a cost component; they relate to the long-term industrial sovereignty of India's manufacturing sector.

The value of research excellence lies in delivering real-world results, making research very much an outcome-based exercise as opposed to an activity without an identifiable outcome or product. Programmes such as the National Capital Goods Scheme are developing more of these outcomes, but the long-term goal should be to develop even more ambitious policies that provide incentives for developing locally developed technologies, reducing reliance on imports, and rapidly transitioning from the laboratory to the manufacturing facility.

Supply chain resilience is a strategic necessity for a country the size of India. The disruption of important imports, such as CNC controllers, can create a domino effect throughout all areas of the Indian manufacturing industry that is hard to manage. Indigenous development and localisation is the long-term solution that requires continued funding by the government via R&D and core technologies.

The reasons behind the investment in productivity are just as strong. AI has changed the way we perform tasks in an office by automating processes, reducing costs and increasing performance. The same analogy can be applied to factories, as intelligent systems can provide similar increases in productivity and cost-competitiveness to both SMEs and MSMEs.

There are positive signs in automotive, defence and engineering exports. Products made in India are often significantly more cost-competitive than the imported alternatives, positioning the country as a dependable source of precision components for global industries.

Yet the opportunity extends far beyond what has already been accomplished. Through sustained investment in foundational technologies and productive systems, India can evolve from a manufacturer of components to a developer of technologies. Such a transformation would enable the country to move from an end-user of industrial technologies to becoming one of the world's leading manufacturing innovators. The groundwork has been laid. A similar level of ambition must now follow.

(The writer is the programme manager, CORE Labs, FSID, IISc)

Russia and the United States projected their own centralised views onto Ukraine and Iran, respectively. As a result, the smaller countries trapped larger ones in a costly confrontation

NEIL MACFARQUHAR

An employee works with FP-1 long range drone at a production facility of Fire Point company, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in an undisclosed location in Ukraine. REUTERS

How major powers misread the regions they attacked

President Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir V Putin, both resist the idea that ostensibly weaker powers fought them to a stalemate, with the two leaders leaning on negotiations to win the capitulation that they failed to secure in battle.

Iran and Ukraine have pushed back robustly against this "might makes right" mentality, with top officials adopting an even more defiant tone in recent days.

In an open letter to Putin this month, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine derided Putin for clinging to power as he aged. "You did not expect full-scale resistance from Ukraine, and you did not foresee that things would go this far," Zelenskyy wrote.

After Iran unleashed a missile barrage against Israel last week in retaliation for attacks against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of Parliament and Iran's top negotiator, threatened more. "Until there is a sincere commitment to restoring trust, Iran's response will not change," he wrote on X.

Their recalcitrance reflects the reality of two wars in stasis, with a profound lack of trust all around stymying progress.

Talks to find peace in Ukraine hit an impasse right before the Iran war started, with Ukraine demanding more robust security guarantees for ceding territory than Russia was willing to accept. Diplomacy has mostly produced prisoner swaps between the sides. The United States, once trying to play the main mediator, has shifted its focus to Iran.

American and Iranian officials now say a peace deal with Iran could be at hand. But it appears that it will initially consist of a framework for negotiations that will push the thorniest issues, like Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions relief, down the road. It is expected to allow for at least the temporary reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to shipping.

"Both conflicts have produced a similar outcome: a weaker power has trapped a stronger one in a costly confrontation," Fiona Hill, who ran Russian and European affairs at the National Security Council during the first Trump administration, wrote in a policy paper for the Brookings Institution this week. "Like Putin, Trump did not have a plan for what would happen next."

The root of the issue is that both presidents sparked wars with limited understanding of the opposing side, Hill said in an interview. "Both projected their own centralised views of their own roles onto Iran and Ukraine, so they thought if they could decapitate the system it would fall," she said.

Putin did not anticipate fierce Ukrainian resistance, for example; Trump ignored admonitions that Iran could shut the Strait of Hormuz, and appeared to underestimate Iran's capacity to retaliate and inflict damage on America's allies in the region. Nor did the Iranian people rise up against their authoritarian leaders, as Israel and the US had urged them to do. While the bombing campaigns of the US and Russia have had devastating effects, analysts noted, air power alone has not proved decisive.

"Although Russia's aggressive invasion of its neighbour differs from Washington's goal of reining in Iran's expansionist threat, both States are finding it equally hard to align their end goals with the means available to achieve them," James F Jeffrey, a fellow at the Washington Institute and a former Middle East envoy, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*.

Ukraine managed to halt Russian troop advances in part by producing next-generation drones, changing the face of modern warfare, while the US has shown no desire to deploy troops inside Iran.

Lack of compromise has prolonged both wars. The United States and Russia have presented extensive demands to the other side, but the list of what their adversaries get in return is short. Putin, in particular, has not budged from his maximalist demands, which include taking land his army has been unable to capture.

Trump has also repeatedly revised terms already agreed with the mediators, frustrating the Iranians.

The United States harmed the process "with contradictory messages, frequent changes in positions and demands, as well as repeated violations of the cease-fire," Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said last week after fighting sputtered back to life.

Each revision erodes a little more of Iran's confidence that Trump will stick to an eventual deal, analysts said. Yet Trump has repeatedly declared that a resolution is just around the corner, as he did Thursday after calling off yet another offensive.

None of the shifting set of goals that he predicted at the beginning of the conflict—which he said would take only a few weeks to achieve—has been realised.

The same is true for Putin. Invading Ukraine, the Kremlin had expected it would quickly seize Kyiv, install a pliant regime and be welcomed by the Ukrainian people. That was more than four years ago. Despite a death toll estimated at more than 350,000 soldiers, Moscow has not fully occupied three of the four Ukrainian provinces that it now claims.

Asked last week about Zelenskyy's latest overture for peace, Putin declared that "military operations"—he still avoids calling it a war — "will end when we achieve our goals."

In reality, both Washington and Moscow "have been defeated in the pursuit of the goals that they had," Hill said.

The circumstances of the two wars do not entirely match. Ukraine had not threatened Russia, while Iran had confronted the US ever since its 1979 Islamic revolution through terrorist attacks, proxy wars and other assaults on American interests. The US did not have territorial designs on Iran, while Putin has occupied almost 20% of Ukraine. Militarily, Russia began destabilising Ukraine by annexing Crimea and fuelling a separatist movement starting in 2014. United States largely avoided a war with Iran until its 12-day bombing campaign last June undertaken with Israel.

Iran is more inclined than Ukraine to make a deal because it faces more dire economic conditions and receives almost no outside support, said Vali R Nasr, a professor of international affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. At the same time, he added, the United States and Israel failed in their strategic objectives in two consecutive wars, in June and February. "So the Iranians want the United States, basically, to come to the table with the realisation that they're not defeated, and the military conquest of Iran is not in the cards," he said.

The main American and Israeli priority is for Iran to abandon its nuclear programme, including surrendering its highly enriched uranium, so it can never develop a nuclear weapon.

Iran has resisted making those concessions, and any resolution on that issue could come months or years down the road. Iran is also asking for longtime American economic sanctions lifted, along with the current naval blockade, and the release of $24 billion in frozen assets.

Iran wants to use the framework under discussion to test whether Trump will really implement an accord, Nasr said.

"They want to see whether he actually will lift the blockade," he said. "They want to see whether he can maintain cease-fire in Lebanon, and they want see whether he will deliver some of their money." If all that happens, they would be willing to negotiate something bigger, he added.

In Ukraine, Russia wants at a minimum that Ukraine withdraw from the strategically important sliver of Donetsk province from which it has been unable to dislodge them, with Russia even losing some ground in recent weeks.

In both wars, Trump has dented American credibility, Hill said. He failed to fulfil his vow to negotiate a peace settlement in Ukraine while undermining NATO in the process, and he did not achieve his main goals in Iran, or protect Gulf allies from Iranian retaliation. Moscow and Kyiv had each hoped that Trump might persuade the other to agree to terms, but now both sides know that they need to look elsewhere for a solution, she said.

The New York Times

When misogyny takes centre court

ADITYA MUKHERJEE

Sexism in sport often gives its practitioners a bad name, as their off-the-cuff remarks expose deeply rooted prejudices. The controversy at this year's French Open has once again underlined how female officials and athletes continue to be hounded by doubts about their authority and competence.

Paraguayan tennis player Adolfo Daniel Vallejo sparked outrage after his marathon five-set defeat to French teenager Moise Kouame at Roland Garros. Following the contest, Vallejo blamed Brazilian umpire Ana Carvalho for failing to control an unruly partisan crowd. But it was the tenor of his remarks that caused an uproar. Vallejo suggested that such emotionally charged matches "need to be umpired by a man", implying that women lack the courage and authority required to handle volatile atmospheres.

The response from the French Tennis Federation (FFT) was swift and severe. Tournament organisers labelled the remarks "unacceptable" and imposed a massive fine of $65,000 — reportedly among the heaviest sanctions in French Open history for unsportsmanlike conduct. Tournament director Amelie Mauresmo firmly rejected the notion that officiating ability has anything to do with gender.

The incident struck a raw nerve because it echoed a pattern to which women in sport have long been inured: the assumption that leadership, toughness and authority are inherently masculine traits. Tennis, despite its progressive reputation and equal prize money at Grand Slams, has hardly been immune from sexism.

Perhaps the most famous chapter came in 1973 with the historic 'Battle of the Sexes' between 29-year-old Billie Jean King and 55-year-old Bobby Riggs. The insolent Riggs openly boasted that even at 55 he could humble the world's best female players. King's emphatic victory became a landmark moment not merely for sport, but for the broader women's rights movement.

In 2017, tennis legend John McEnroe ignited a heated debate after describing Serena Williams as 'the best female player ever' before adding that if she competed regularly on the men's tour, she would rank 'like 700 in the world'. The remark was widely criticised for diminishing Serena's extraordinary achievements by insisting on measuring women's excellence against male benchmarks. Serena herself responded sharply, urging McEnroe to keep her "out of statements that are not factually based".

Serena Williams has repeatedly found herself at the centre of debates involving sexism and double standards. During the 2018 US Open final against Naomi Osaka, Serena argued that male players routinely engage in heated outbursts without facing the same level of criticism or punishment directed at women — a frustration that, at times, carried the despair of a Munch scream. The controversy divided opinion, but it reopened important conversations about how female athletes are judged differently for displays of anger, passion or competitiveness.

Then there were the comments by former Romanian player and businessman Ion Tiriac, who drew flak after making disparaging remarks about Serena Williams' age and body weight. Another chapter in the Sisyphean struggle female athletes face over their appearance.

The Vallejo controversy is especially revealing because it concerns a female official. Women referees and umpires across sports frequently confront hostility that goes beyond criticism of decisions. Their authority itself is questioned. Male officials may be accused of incompetence; female officials are often accused of being inherently incapable.

This prejudice is not unique to tennis. Female referees in football, cricket and basketball have regularly reported abuse questioning whether women belong in positions of authority over male athletes. The problem reflects broader societal attitudes where leadership qualities are still unconsciously coded as masculine.

What makes such remarks dangerous is that they reinforce barriers already faced by women trying to enter coaching, officiating and administrative roles in sport. Every time a high-profile athlete suggests that women cannot handle pressure, it legitimises old stereotypes for a new generation.

Yet there is another side to the story. The strong institutional response from the FFT also signals how much sport has changed. Remarks that might once have been dismissed as locker-room frustration now attract real consequences. Federations increasingly recognise that sexism damages not only individuals but also the credibility of sport itself.

The irony, of course, is that tennis has produced countless examples disproving the very stereotypes Vallejo invoked. The real question, therefore, is not whether women have the courage to withstand pressure. The more pressing question is why parts of the sporting world still struggle to accept it.

(The writer is a Delhi-based journalist)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: JUNE 1976

12 lakh school kids to get midday meals

Mysore, June 14
The Government proposed to provide during this year free midday meals to about 12 lakh school-going children in the State, Mr. H. V. Srirangaraju, DPI said here, today. Inaugurating the eighth standard classes of Central Food Technological Research Institute High School, Mr. Srirangaraju said the department, in collaboration with the CFTRI was keen on providing cheap and nutritious food to the maximum number of students possible with the resources available.

25 YEARS AGO: JUNE 2001

BJP joined Ayodhya stir to fight vote politics: Advani

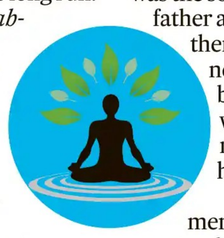
New Delhi, June 14
Union Home Minister L K Advani today told the Liberhan Commission that the BJP joined the Ayodhya movement in 1989 basically to fight the vote bank politics of Congress after Rajiv Gandhi government succumbed to pressure from minorities to negate the Supreme Court ruling on Shah Bano case. Deposing before the Commission probing the sequence of events leading to demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992, Mr Advani said the turning point came in 1985 when the SC judgement was sought to be negated.

OASIS | S RADHA PRATHI

Self awareness for self control

We as a nation are still not done with the debate of whether we should include sex education in our curriculum or not. Every time a horrendous crime of sexual nature takes place, the discussion erupts and subsides like a storm in a teacup, only to resurface when the issue takes an uglier turn and becomes simply unavoidable and unwieldy.

The issue cannot be wished away. We must arrive at a middle path which will create awareness about our physical bodies and their functions. It is an error to think that it is easy for a person to lead a life of chastity if he is brought up in complete ignorance of sensual pleasures. Virtue guarded only by ignorance can prove to be dangerous and disastrous in the long run.



An *upakatha* in the *Mahabharata* illustrates this truth in the following story. Once upon a time the country of Anga was afflicted by a severe famine. The people lost hope as the drought continued over many years. There was a large-scale destruction of life and property. Romapada, the king of Anga, was told that if a chaste celibate sage called Rishyashringa stepped into their unfortunate land, then he would usher in the much-awaited rains. A little homework revealed that Rishyashringa was the son of Sage Vibhandaka. The father and son lived in a forest all by themselves. Rishyashringa had never seen any other human being besides his father. So when the messengers of Romapada went to fetch him, he protested vehemently.

Hence, the king and his men decided to implement the natural instincts of human beings to do their job for them. They commissioned the beautiful princess Shanta to lure Rishyashringa into Anga. Accordingly, the princess and her friends loitered around the hermitage and succeeded in attracting the attention of the young sage towards themselves. Over a period of time Rishyashringa was completely in love with Shantha. One day, when Vibhandaka was away, the princess managed to entice the young man and lead him to her country to usher in the rain clouds.

The story subtly tells us knowledge is not always about exotic subjects; it is also about knowing ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually. For it is only when we are aware of ourselves that we can exercise control over ourselves and pave the way for a cultured and controlled civilisation.

Fast-greying Kerala reboots elderly care; new schemes likely in budget

First-of-its-kind govt dept to bring welfare projects under one umbrella

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

Kerala, which boasts several programmes for the elderly, has struggled to achieve results due to poor awareness among target groups and the government's lack of focus, with schemes scattered across various departments.

Against this backdrop, the new Congress government's decision to set up a dedicated department for senior citizens, the first of its kind in the country, assumes significance. The move comes as Kerala's elderly population nears 20% and grows at a faster rate. The state also faces a high old-age dependency ratio of 26%, while rising overseas migration leaves many elders alone at home, a large share of them widowed.

The new department will consolidate existing schemes under one umbrella and launch fresh initiatives. Chief Minister VD Satheesan himself is in charge of the portfolio, with rules of business for the department to be notified soon, according to sources at the Chief Minister's Office.

A set of schemes for the elderly is expected to be a highlight of the maiden budget of the Satheesan government to be presented on June 19.

One key announcement could be the launch of 'Care Cabin' support centres in all districts to provide legal aid and protection to senior citizens. Special clinics to tackle the growing problem of dementia among the elderly are also on the cards.

The budget may unveil schemes to keep older people engaged in social life, supported by volunteers.

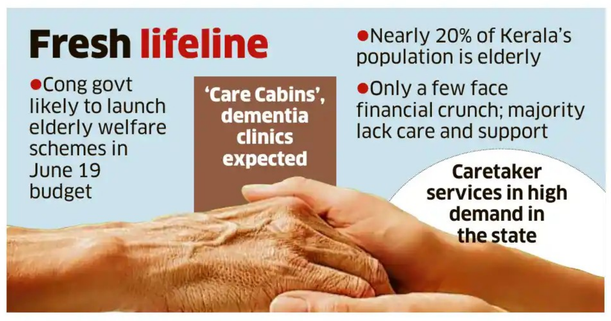
Kerala already has a host of initiatives for senior citizens. Among the most prominent is the 'Vayomithram' project, introduced by the previous Congress government led by Oommen Chandy. The scheme benefits around three lakh people above 65 years, offering doorstep medical support and free medicines. It is expected to be expanded to more parts of the state.

The previous LDF government had presented a separate budget for senior citizens.

The Kerala State Elderly Commission, a quasi-judicial body for the welfare of the elderly and the first of its kind in the country, set up by the LDF government, has submitted 75 recommendations to the state on measures to strengthen protection and care for older people.

"Only around 20% of senior citizens face financial difficulties, while the majority struggle due to a lack of support and care," said commission chairperson K Somaprasad, a former Rajya Sabha MP.

The commission also stressed the need for proper training of caretakers employed by private agencies, along with strict regulation of such agencies. Their services are in high demand as Kerala's elderly population continues to grow.


Fresh lifeline
Cong govt likely to launch elderly welfare schemes in June 19 budget
'Care Cabins', dementia clinics expected
Nearly 20% of Kerala's population is elderly
Only a few face financial crunch; majority lack care and support
Caretaker services in high demand in the state

Ceasefire group behind six Naga deaths: Manipur DyCM

SUMIR KARMAKAR
IMPHAL, DHNS

Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho on Sunday said an armed Kuki group, which is part of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with the government, was involved in the abduction of six Naga villagers on May 13 and their subsequent killing.

"I should tell openly today that this crime was committed by a particular group, which is part of the SoO. So, this is under the control of the central government," Dikho, who belongs to the Naga community, told reporters at Imphal during a presser addressed by CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh.

"This type of crime, where persons were killed and their bodies cut into pieces, can not be tolerated. I want to appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that such people under SoO be controlled. People of Manipur want peace, and so, the situation should be brought under control," he added.

The CM, however, did not comment on who was involved in the killings, which have escalated the tension between the Naga and the Kuki communities. The case was earlier handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Security forces recovered the bodies of the six Nagas, hailing from the Konsakhul village in the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district on June 10.

India restricts crew deployment to war zones

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Days after three Indian seafarers were killed in a US military strike on the commercial vessel MT Settebello off the Oman coast, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) has directed maritime recruitment and placement agencies to restrict the deployment of Indian seafarers to conflict zones until further orders.

In an official circular, DGS advised masters of vessels operating in or transiting through the Gulf region — including the Strait of Hormuz and adjoining waters — to maintain heightened security awareness.

Ship masters have been asked to closely monitor navigational warnings and advisories issued by security agencies and strictly implement all applicable ship security measures and company security procedures.

"This Directorate further reiterates that all RPSL companies and shipping companies (maritime recruitment and placement agencies) are advised to restrict deployment or send Indian seafarers to conflict areas until further orders. However, companies may carry out crew change in emergency situations with the consent of crew members," the circular stated.

5 arrested in Rs 310-crore Guj cyberfraud

VERAVAL (GUJARAT), PTI: The police in Gujarat's Gir Somnath have busted a cyberfraud racket involving suspicious transactions totalling more than Rs 310 crore through mule bank accounts, and arrested five persons with it.

Investigators have said this was the biggest cybercrime case detected in the district so far.

Superintendent of Police Jaideepsinh Jadeja said the case was registered by the Cyber Crime Police Station as part of the state-wide "Operation Mule Hunt 2.0", launched recently to identify mule account holders, crack down on cyberfraud networks and facilitate recovery of money lost by victims.

14 Indians rescued as vessel sinks off Oman

MSV Virat 1 suffers engine failure; US Navy drops raft

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

An Indian-flagged dhow sank off Oman's coast on Sunday morning after engine failure, but all 14 crew members were rescued safely and are now en route to Mumbai, officials said.

The vessel, identified as MSV Virat 1, encountered mechanical trouble approximately 80 nautical miles east of Ras Al Hadd. Following the distress alert, a swift multinational rescue operation was launched.

The Indian Embassy in Muscat confirmed that the crew members are "safe and in good health" and have been transferred aboard the cargo ship MV Jabal Ali 9, which is bound for Mumbai.

"Rescue operation involving Indian-flagged MSV Virat 1 has been successfully completed. All 14 crew members have been rescued and are presently onboard Jabal Ali 9, heading to Mumbai," the embassy posted on X.

US Navy to the rescue

According to sources, the US Navy played a key role in the operation. A US Navy P-8 maritime patrol aircraft responded by dropping a life raft near the sinking dhow and monitoring the evacuation.

The navy also coordinated surface assistance from the nearby merchant vessel MV Jabal Ali 9, a St Kitts and Nevis-flagged ship. The crew transferred to the life raft before the dhow sank.

Omani authorities coordinated the overall rescue effort, which involved ships in the vicinity.

The successful rescue comes against the backdrop of heightened maritime tensions off the Oman coast.

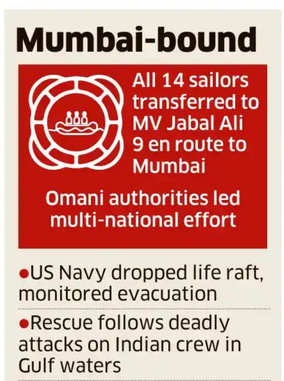
Previous attacks

Last week, three vessels with Indian crew came under attack, resulting in the deaths of three Indian seafarers aboard the tanker MT Settebello.

In a separate incident, US forces fired Hellfire missiles into the engine room of the Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker MT Jalveer near Oman, although all 20 Indian crew members aboard were evacuated safely.

India has strongly protested the US military actions, summoning the US Chargé d'Affaires in New Delhi twice in a week and describing the strikes on commercial vessels with Indian crew as "unacceptable".

This incident marks the latest maritime emergency in the region, which has seen increased threats to merchant shipping in recent months.


Mumbai-bound
All 14 sailors transferred to MV Jabal Ali 9 en route to Mumbai
Omani authorities led multi-national effort
US Navy dropped life raft, monitored evacuation
Rescue follows deadly attacks on Indian crew in Gulf waters
Three Indians killed in US Navy strike last week

In flex-fuel push, Centre gives go-ahead for 100% ethanol framework

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Centre has formally cleared the regulatory framework for using 100% ethanol (E100) as a vehicular fuel, paving the way for wider adoption of ethanol-powered vehicles and accelerating efforts to reduce dependence on imported crude oil.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday announced that he had signed regulations authorising E100, establishing a legal framework for automakers, fuel retailers and testing agencies to commercially deploy vehicles running on pure ethanol.

"I signed the file finalising the regulations to legally authorise the use of 100% ethanol," Gadkari said at the Sugar, Ethanol & Bio-Energy India Conference in Nagpur.

The move builds on the recent introduction of E85 fuel in Delhi and goes beyond the existing E20 blending programme. It opens the door for dedicated flex-fuel vehicles designed to operate on high-ethanol blends as a viable alternative to petrol, electric, CNG and hybrid options.

Automakers have already begun responding. Maruti Suzuki has unveiled a flex-fuel WagonR, while Hero MotoCorp has introduced ethanol-compatible motorcycles.

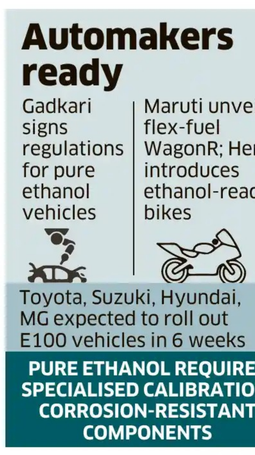
Gadkari noted that Toyota, Suzuki, Hyundai and MG are expected to launch E100-compatible vehicles within six weeks.

Unlike conventional petrol engines, E100 vehicles require specialised calibration and fuel-system components. Ethanol is more corrosive and absorbs moisture readily, necessitating robust materials and additives.

Although marketed as E100, the fuel typically contains 93-95% ethanol blended with petrol and other additives for better cold-start performance and handling. Experts believe the approval would encourage fresh investments in flex-fuel technology, component localisation and bio-refineries.

Existing E20-compatible vehicles cannot run on E100 without major modifications. Oil marketing companies must invest in dedicated dispensing infrastructure, storage and distribution systems tailored to ethanol's properties. Additionally, E100 offers lower energy density than petrol, resulting in higher fuel consumption for the same distance.

The government views the policy as a strategic tool for energy security and rural development. India imports 85% of its crude oil, making fuel a key component of the import bill. Expanding ethanol use is expected to cut this dependence, stabilise exposure to global price volatility, and boost demand for domestic feedstocks like sugarcane and maize.


Automakers ready
Gadkari signs regulations for pure ethanol vehicles
Maruti unveils flex-fuel WagonR; Hero introduces ethanol-ready bikes
Toyota, Suzuki, Hyundai, MG expected to roll out E100 vehicles in 6 weeks
PURE ETHANOL REQUIRES SPECIALISED CALIBRATION, CORROSION-RESISTANT COMPONENTS

'Obedient servant': Rahul targets PM over US remarks

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over a US warning following the killing of three Indian sailors in US attacks, saying "our compromised PM" listens like an "obedient servant" and "quietly obeys".

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha's remarks came as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar that any violation of its Strait of Hormuz blockade and illicit transport of Iranian oil would not be tolerated.

"Just days after the murder of three Indian sailors in American attacks, there is no remorse, no apology. On the contrary, America has continued issuing orders. Read their words: 'Comply immediately with the orders of the US military'. No violation 'will be tolerated' [sic]," he posted on X.

"A compromised PM will not defend the country's honor – because those who insult the country are under their control [sic]," he added.

Assertive alright, but Cong's 'big brother' approach may crack up bloc

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Congress' release of Rahul Gandhi's speech at a closed-door I.N.D.I.A bloc meeting is seen as the grand old party's assertion against the weakening regional parties that had previously questioned its leadership.

One could not have imagined the regional parties accepting an official leadership role for the Congress before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, but the results of the 2026 Assembly elections have sealed it in favour of the grand old party.

Barring a few creases in the opposition fabric, the June 8 meeting ended on a positive note with leaders from various shades acknowledging the Congress' role as the bloc's "glue", as stated by National Conference's Omar Abdullah.

Having said that, the Congress' attempt at asserting overbearing control over its I.N.D.I.A-bloc allies might break up the coalition.

The Congress has already invited the ire of some of the allies, especially the CPM, over the release of the audio and the transcript on Friday.

A section in the party was of the view that other leaders should be consulted before putting it in the public domain. However, the Congress managers went ahead and released the Hindi translation of Rahul's speech also, even after the CPM on Saturday criticised Rahul for his comments against Pinarayi Vijayan.

According to the transcript of the speech, Rahul insisted that he would accept any criticism against the party or him with a smile. He went on to say that the Congress' role is "fundamentally different" from others, which is to "unite all of you".

Rahul did not sound aggressive at the I.N.D.I.A meeting. But he was blunt to point out that some Trinamool Congress leaders were in a "dreamland" when they spoke about winning Bengal without considering the "capture of institutions" by the RSS-BJP, and none of the I.N.D.I.A leaders believed him when he said they could beat BJP in the 2024 polls.

Rahul's positioning of the Congress as the only party that read the political tea leaves correctly also comes as the Trinamool, whose leaders were projecting a national role for Mamata Banerjee, bit the dust.

However, it is not just the Left parties. The VCK has also come out against the Congress' approach — even before the speech was released — with its general secretary D Raja Kumar, a Lok Sabha member, writing that the Congress upholds the fight for the Constitution but is reluctant to champion federalism.

Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhiwith other leaders during a press conference after the I.N.D.I.A bloc meeting. PTI FILE

Disclose tender process for answer sheets: CIC to CBSE

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Central Information Commission (CIC) has directed the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to disclose "point-wise categorical" information permissible under the RTI Act related to exam expenditure and details of answer books, including the tendering and procurement process, for Class 10 and Class 12 board examinations.

After setting aside the CBSE's earlier denial of information under the RTI, the panel asked it to furnish revised replies and said that the information exempt from disclosure may be masked under Section 10 of the RTI Act, while any denial under Section 8(1)(d) should be properly justified.

The case arose from an RTI application seeking details of answer books used in Class 10 and Class 12 board examinations during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 sessions, including paper quality, number of pages, purchase cost, expenditure, GST payments and details of the tender process for procurement of answer sheets. However, information relating to the purchase cost of answer books, the number purchased and total expenditure incurred on procurement was denied under Section 8(1)(e) of the RTI Act.

FRUITS OF LABOUR

In blazing Anantapur, a red-hot miracle

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Anantapur, the parched heart of Andhra Pradesh's Rayalaseema region, is not a place you would associate with apples. Summer temperatures routinely breach 45° C, and the district receives among the lowest rainfall in peninsular India.

Yet it is in the nondescript village of Kotanka here that 46-year-old farmer N V Ramana Reddy has pulled off what agricultural scientists and fellow farmers alike considered impossible: a bumper harvest of bright red, juicy apples in conditions that would typically kill the fruit trees outright.

Reddy's success is believed to be the first instance of commercially viable apple cultivation in the Telugu states and possibly a first for peninsular India.

The journey was not without cost. Around 2020, Ramana Reddy procured three varieties of apple saplings from Himachal Pradesh and planted them on his land. The trees struggled. The apples never grew beyond the size of a lemon. After 3.5 years of persistent effort and a loss of roughly Rs 8 lakh, the experiment collapsed.

"People around me warned that it was impossible to cultivate apples in such heat. But I wanted to take the risk," Reddy told *DH*.

Ramana Reddy in his orchard.

The breakthrough came through an unlikely conversation. A chance discussion with a friend who works in Israel steered him towards a heat-resistant apple variety developed by Israeli agricultural scientists precisely for arid, high-temperature conditions.

His friend dispatched the mother plant to India by parcel. For the next six months, Reddy worked on grafting and propagating the plants at home.

In 2024, he planted around 600 saplings across two and a half acres, using drip irrigation to manage the chronic water scarcity. "The rest is history," he said with visible excitement.

Within 1.5 years, Reddy had harvested two tonnes of apples, which he sold in the local market. Crucially, the harvest arrives during March, April, and May, precisely when the domestic market sees no fresh apples at all.

Traditional Himalayan apples from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir reach consumers from November to January; what is available beyond that is typically cold-storage produce that has lost flavour.

Reddy's fruit quality surprised even sceptics. In colour and taste, he said, his apples hold their own against the celebrated Shimla variety as vividly red as the blazing Anantapur sun.

For him, the apple orchard is the latest chapter in a career defined by agricultural risk-taking. A few years ago, he was among the first farmers in the region to introduce dragonfruit cultivation, sourcing plants from Thailand, and also pioneered date farming with plant material procured from Abu Dhabi. Both experiments are now established successes.

Hailstorms, rising imports upset Kashmir apple cart; growers hit by 30% loss

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Multiple hailstorms that struck Kashmir during the crucial fruit-setting stage this year have damaged apple orchards across the Valley, dealing a fresh blow to growers already struggling to compete with a surge in imported apples in the Indian market.

Repeated bouts of hail and strong winds over the past two months have scarred young fruit, damaged foliage, and reduced hopes of a bumper harvest in India's largest apple-producing region.

The losses come at a difficult time for Kashmir's horticulture sector, which has been grappling with increasing competition from apple imports from countries such as Iran, Turkey, the United States, and New Zealand.

"Hailstorm havoc has caused nearly 30% damage to the Valley's agriculture and horticulture sector. Thousands of orchardists and farmers have suffered huge losses," said Fayaz Ahmad Malik, president of the Kashmir Fruit Growers and Dealers Association.

An apple orchard during the harvesting season, in Budgam, Kashmir. PTI FILE

Kashmir produces nearly three-fourths of India's apples, and the industry supports around 35 lakh people directly or indirectly. Apples from the Valley are sold across the country, including in major markets like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru.

Growers say the repeated hailstorms have not only reduced the quantity of fruit but may also affect quality. Even minor surface damage can significantly lower market prices, forcing farmers to sell produce at discounted rates.

Rise in cultivation costs

Weather-related losses have also increased cultivation costs. Farmers now have to spend on sprays and orchard-management practices to protect damaged trees from disease and improve fruit quality before harvest.

Industry representatives warn that climate-related disruptions are becoming more frequent in Kashmir. Hailstorms, untimely rainfall, and temperature fluctuations have increasingly affected apple production over the past few years, making horticulture a riskier enterprise.

The latest damage has revived demands for crop insurance and financial assistance for orchardists. "The affected growers would have received compensation by now if the crop insurance scheme had been implemented in time," Malik said.

Vaishnaw calls for tech-driven hiring process

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has emphasised the need for a more transparent, accurate and technology-driven recruitment system in Indian Railways, directing officials to further strengthen processes through innovation and accountability.

During a high-level review meeting with senior officials of the Railway Recruitment Board, the minister reviewed the functioning of the recruitment ecosystem and noted positive feedback on the new annual recruitment calendar and quarterly vacancy notifications.

"The calendar-based recruitment framework has enabled aspirants to plan their preparation more effectively as it brings greater predictability to the recruitment process," Vaishnaw said.

Mere non-payment of dues can't be criminal breach of trust: SC

Says buyer's failure to clear seller's dues gives rise only to civil liabilities

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has held that a mere allegation of non-payment of outstanding dues does not constitute the offence of criminal breach of trust under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and such disputes should be resolved through civil remedies.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and Vijay Bishnoi allowed a plea by one Rahul Agarwal, quashing criminal proceedings against him under IPC Section 406.

The court set aside the Allahabad High Court order of February 16, which had upheld a trial court's rejection of Agarwal's discharge application.

The case originated from a complaint by a jewellery shop owner in Agra. According to it, Agarwal purchased silver jewellery for around Rs 11 lakh on credit between October 11, 2015, and June 29, 2016. An amount of Rs 5,24,929 allegedly remained unpaid despite repeated demands.

The complainant approached the court under Section 156(3) CrPC in January 2018, leading to proceedings under IPC Sections 420, 406, 504 and 506. The trial court took cognisance and summoned Agarwal only under Section 406 IPC (criminal breach of trust) in 2019.

Agarwal moved the HC, which permitted him to file a discharge application before the trial court. The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Agra, rejected the plea on December 3, 2025, observing that the defence raised disputed questions of fact that required examination during trial.

Setting aside the orders, the Supreme Court clarified the essential ingredients of the offence under Section 405 IPC, particularly the requirement of "entrustment". "The transaction of sale stands on an entirely different footing, inasmuch as the ownership in the goods itself stands transferred from the seller to the purchaser," it observed.

Examining the complaint and statements recorded under CrPC Sections 200 and 202, the court noted that the silver anklets were supplied under regular invoices. The complainant had not alleged that the goods were handed over for safe custody, as an agent, or in any fiduciary capacity.

The court emphasised that once goods were sold and ownership was transferred, the relationship became that of a buyer and seller. Any failure to clear outstanding dues in such cases gave rise only to civil liabilities, the bench said.

Eight pilgrims dead as van falls into well in Maharashtra

MUMBAI, DHNS: At least eight persons were killed and six injured after a pick-up van carrying pilgrims veered off the road and plunged into an open well in Maharashtra's Solapur district on Sunday.

The accident occurred on the Mhaswad-Pandharpur Road in Solapur. The victims, who were from Pandharpur, were returning to their native village after a pilgrimage to the Siddhanath temple in Mhaswad.

According to preliminary information, the driver lost control of the vehicle, which swerved off the road and fell into the well. Several passengers were trapped inside the vehicle.

Rescue teams from the police, revenue and disaster management departments rushed to the spot. Local residents joined the rescue efforts. Solapur Collector S. Karthikeyan and SP Atul Kulkarni monitored the rescue and relief operations.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnaivis spoke to officials and reviewed the situation.

The accident is the third in recent times in Maharashtra where a vehicle plunged into an open well.

In April 2025, seven women farm labourers were killed when a tractor-trolley fell into a well in Nanded district. .

In May this year, nine members of a family, including six children, died after an MUV plunged into an open well in Nashik. .

Officials said an investigation has been launched to ascertain the exact cause of Sunday's accident.

Wildlife experts raise alarm over Gir land diversions

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

Seeking a high-level inquiry into several alleged irregularities in the grant of permissions and proposed diversion of forest land affecting the Asiatic lion population, a group of seven present and former members of the Gujarat State Board of Wildlife has submitted a written representation to both the state and central governments.

The representation mentions a proposal to divert 75 hectares of Babarkot Reserve Forest near Rajula under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) for mining purposes. It says that the proposal endangers over 50 lions and other Schedule 1 wildlife, as the area was included as an "important lion corridor in the management plan of Gir."

The group has also raised objections over an alleged permission granted to a popular folk artist to re-enter a 'ness' in Lilapani, located in the eastern region of Gir forest in the Amreli district. A 'ness' is a traditional forest settlement which is primarily inhabited by Maldharis, or a pastoral community who live with their livestock.

The written representation claims that after the alleged permission to the folk artist, over 50 Maldharis have also come forward seeking similar permission. They have said that it can be disastrous for the Gir landscape.

"This is absolutely contrary to the government's own scheme of resettlement of Maldharis outside Gir Sanctuary," the group has stated.

They have also alleged that authorities have diverted reserve forest land to an illegal resort in Khicha village of Dhari taluka in Amreli.

Saying that such an action sends "negative precedence", the representative stated that the permission had been given for the conversion of agricultural land into non-agricultural land only for residential purposes. However, the same is being used for commercial purposes.

The representation also mentions two PILs in the Gujarat high court related to several issues in the Gir landscape and lion preservation, rapid commercialisation in the region, and unnatural deaths in train and road accidents.

4 killed as passengers jump off train after fire rumour, run over by another in MP

MORENA (MP), PTI: A rumour of fire in the Khajuraho-Udaipur Intercity Express train turned out to be fatal for four passengers, who jumped out on the tracks and were run over by another express train in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, officials said.

The incident occurred around 4.15 pm between Hetampur and Dholpur section of Jhansi railway division, they said.

These passengers had hurriedly disembarked from their train following a chain pull caused by the fire rumour, an official said.

"Four passengers of the Khajuraho-Udaipur Intercity Express (19665) jumped off a general coach, second from the engine, after panic spread over reports of a fire," North Central Railway's Jhansi division Public Relation Officer Manoj Singh said.

Just then, the Patalkot Express was passing by on the adjacent tracks, he added.

The four passengers who had alighted from the train failed to notice the approaching train and were run over, resulting in their deaths.

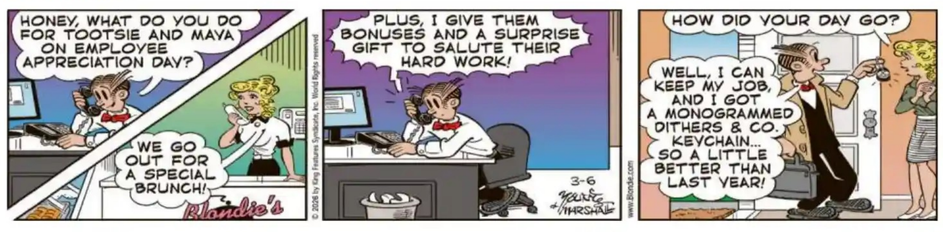
The incident triggered panic among passengers, and railway authorities and police were alerted immediately.

The Morena Collector said that three women and a boy have lost their lives in the accident.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie


HONEY, WHAT DO YOU DO FOR TOOTSIE AND MAYA ON EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY?
WE GO OUT FOR A SPECIAL BRUNCH!
Blondie's
PLUS, I GIVE THEM BONUSES AND A SURPRISE GIFT TO SALUTE THEIR HARD WORK!
3-6
HOW DID YOUR DAY GO?
WELL, I CAN KEEP MY JOB, AND I GOT A MONOGRAMMED DITHERS & CO. KEYCHAIN... SO A LITTLE BETTER THAN LAST YEAR!

Hagar The Horrible

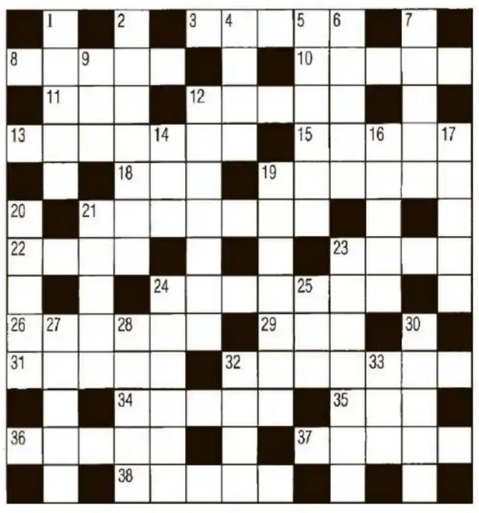
Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

HERE'S A BOOK ABOUT PIRATES, SIR
YOU MEAN GUYS WHO STEAL OTHER PEOPLE'S RECORDINGS?
1/14
I WONDER IF THEY MAKE TREASURE MAPS TELLING WHERE THE RECORDINGS ARE BURIED...
YOU'RE HOPELESS, SIR!

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12438



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Choose a new spelling for ìchampsî (5)
8 A code some get wrong outright! (5)
10 Worry a fellow (5)
11 Cut short, left work (3)
12 Diana as a mythical nymph (5)
13 Feel disturbed when you see a chap robbed (7)
15 Am all bent on backing the beast! (5)
18 Female making a firm point (3)
19 A pianist of importance? (3,3)
21 Bung very quietly into store, perhaps (7)
22 Cars can turn in them (4)
23 Fully expected to back us again (4)
24 Excursionist coming a cropper? (7)
26 The news is bad for a porter (6)
29 What the police had on his hair? (3)
31 She's a bit of a siren, note (5)
32 Where the pleasure is only moderate? (7)
34 Something afoot when boats are wrecked (5)
35 It's cold, I see, at mid-September (3)
36 One of those pieces of eight? (5)
37 Wearers of tight trousers (5)
38 Their tread is endless (5)

DOWN
1 Sweetie money? (5)
2 Views, maybe from space, of planets with no aircraft? (7)
4 The nut in charge (4)
5 He's after big things at sea (6)
6 Deplorably shifty about publicity (5)
7 More than one could be produced in Madras (5)
9 Animal on toast? (3)
12 In Wales and elsewhere, various ways to get a drink (7)
14 A sound business letter (3)
16 The Francophile's love? (5)
17 Changeless good spirit (5)
19 Notice it's exclusive! (4,3)
20 Moira confused an islander (5)
21 If you've vision, there's opportunity (5)
23 Greedy where flesh is involved? (7)
24 Agreement to try out a new blend of tea (6)
25 One in a hole, at golf? (3)
27 Standing proudly before the court (5)
28 Attack with a stone, possibly? (5)
30 Fierce among fishes, that is! (5)
32 Warning in advance? (4)
33 Card expert (3)

ACROSS
3 Establish by law (5)
8 Biblical prophet (5)
10 Firearm (5)
11 Woman's long scarf (3)
12 Of the nose (5)
13 Gastronome (7)
15 Male voice (5)
18 Hang heavily (3)
19 Next to (6)
21 Corpse (7)
22 Nautical cry (4)
23 Prison room (4)
24 African country (7)
26 Topics (6)
29 Distant (3)
31 Indian instrument (5)
32 Destroy completely (4,3)
34 Gain access to (3,2)
35 Merriment (3)
36 Start (5)
37 Sensational (5)
38 Celebrity, in short (5)

DOWN
1 Automaton (5)
2 Gossip (7)
4 Undiluted (4)
5 Bomb hole (6)
6 Roof slabs (5)
7 Deluge (5)
9 Former French coin (3)
12 Nullifies (7)
14 Angry (3)
16 Boy's name (5)
17 Respond (5)
19 Advantage (7)
20 Desires (5)
21 Celestial body (5)
23 Cautious (7)
24 Tranquil (6)
25 Hiatus (3)
27 Conceals (5)
28 Sorcery (5)
30 Soldier's jacket (5)
32 Signal goodbye (4)
33 Belonging to us (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2684

ACROSS: 1 Blossom, 5 Commend, 9 Inexact, 10 Mediate, 11 Drake, 12 Rock-solid, 13 Pull a face, 15 Sudan, 16 Dodge, 18 Ad nauseam, 21 Embattled, 24 Eland, 25 Shotgun, 26 Outrage, 27 Reserve, 28 Largess.

DOWN: 1 Build-up, 2 Overall, 3 Stalemate, 4 Meter, 5 Come clean, 6 Midas, 7 Enabled, 8 Dresden, 14 At a glance, 15 Sou'wester, 16 Dresser, 17 Dubious, 19 Emanate, 20 Madness, 22 Tiger, 23 Droll.

◆ SU-DO-KU-6932 ◆

	7		1				9	
		3		7	4			6
8		6	5	2				
7		5						
1								9
						8		3
				1	6	7		4
4			3	5		9		
	6				7		3	

hard

SOLUTION TO 6931

3	7	1	4	8	6	2	5	9
9	4	6	1	2	5	7	3	8
5	8	2	9	3	7	1	4	6
4	1	7	8	5	3	9	6	2
2	6	5	7	1	9	3	8	4
8	3	9	2	6	4	5	1	7
1	9	3	6	4	2	8	7	5
6	2	8	5	7	1	4	9	3
7	5	4	3	9	8	6	2	1

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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							1st Letter Triple	RACK 1
A1	A1	L1	T1	Y4	L1	F4		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 2
A1	O1	T1	Y4	B3	N1	L1		
								RACK 3
L1	A1	L1	Y4	N1	E1	S1		
							Double Word Score	RACK 4
R1	E1	I1	H4	M3	M3	S1		
								RACK 5
C3	P3	O1	I1	O1	C3	L1		

PAR SCORE 200-210
by JUDD

FIVE RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

D2	E1	L1	E1	T1	E1	S1	RACK 1	= 66
E1	X8	T1	R1	A1	C3	T1	RACK 2	= 82
D2	I1	A1	L1	L1	E1	R1	RACK 3	= 58
P3	U1	M3	P3	I1	N1	G2	RACK 4	= 64
							JUDD'S TOTAL	270

PAR SCORE 175-185

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HAEYN

CIYTH

BSTMIU

VJLAIO

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ( ) ( ) ( )

(Answers Tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: YOUTH ESSAY GUITAR CLINCH
Answer: During the Middle Ages, this tailor specialized in armor for knights. It was his — STRONG SUIT

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Buster! You know I'll catch you! I always do!
JURR REAL PET SUPPLIES
1/2/3
THE DOG WAS SPOTTED STEALING FROM THE PET STORE, AND SECURITY WAS ---

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HITORI-3386

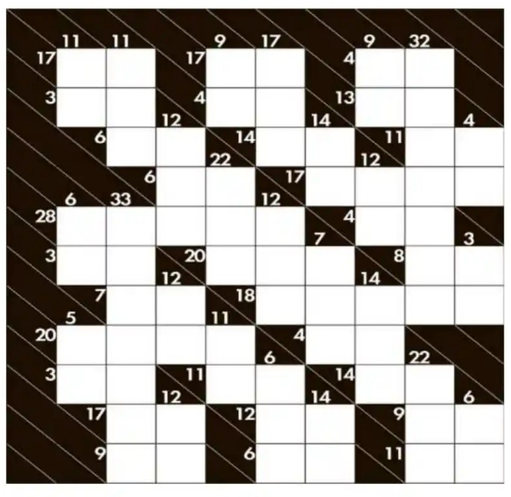
3	2	4	5	6	1	8	7
6	1	7	3	5	3	3	6
2	8	6	3	7	5	1	7
7	4	5	3	1	8	1	3
6	7	7	4	2	1	6	1
1	6	2	8	6	6	6	4
5	6	1	1	3	2	4	7
4	6	3	1	8	5	7	7

SOLUTION TO 3385

■	6	■	4	7	■	5	1
8	1	7	5	4	3	6	■
■	3	■	2	8	■	1	4
4	8	1	■	6	5	7	3
6	■	4	1	■	8	■	5
■	7	5	■	1	■	8	2
5	■	6	8	2	4	3	7
2	5	8	7	3	6	4	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3386



SOLUTION TO 3385

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3947

■								■
4	■	6				2	■	7
1		■	5		4	3		
		7	■		■			
				■			6	5
	6		■		■			9
8		5				■		3
6	7						■	
■		4					9	■

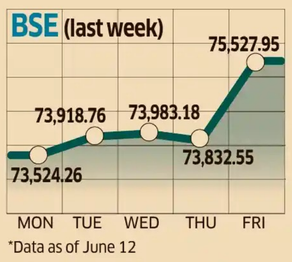
SOLUTION TO 3946

8	3	6	1	7	5	9	4	2
4	2	1	8	9	3	7	6	5
7	9	5	4	2	6	1	3	8
1	5	9	6	8	4	2	7	3
6	4	8	7	3	2	5	9	1
2	7	3	5	1	9	6	8	4
3	1	7	9	5	8	4	2	6
5	8	4	2	6	7	3	1	9
9	6	2	3	4	1	8	5	7

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

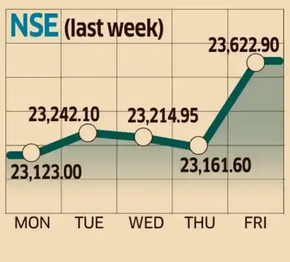
DH BUSINESS

DECCAN HERALD
Monday
June 15, 2026



*Data as of June 12

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
KOTAKBANK	6.85%	INFY	-6.73%
AXISBANK	6.47%	ETERNAL	-4.93%
ICICIBANK	6.19%	TATASTEEL	-4.33%
INDIGO	5.14%	HCLTECH	-3.92%
SBIN	4.00%	TECHM	-3.59%



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
TRENT	46.01%	ADANIENT	-21.09%
ONGC	11.04%	TMPV	-15.32%
TATACONSUM	10.80%	CIPLA	-7.78%
NTPC	8.59%	ADANI PORTS	-7.46%
POWERGRID	7.23%	ASIAN PAINTS	-6.74%

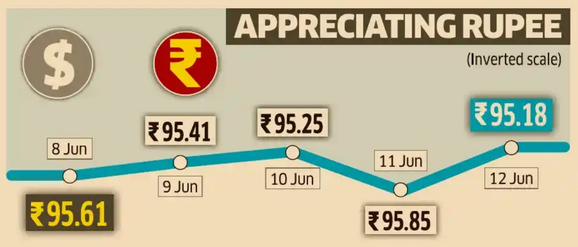
Sensex (52-week)

Jun 12, 2025	Jun 12, 2026	
81,691.98	75,527.95	-7.55%

Nifty (52-week)

Jun 12, 2025	Jun 12, 2026	
24,888.20	23,622.90	-5.08%

10-year Bond yield 6.86%



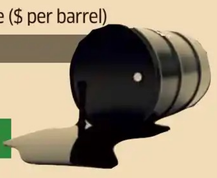
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 95.18	SGD	₹ 74.30
Pound	₹ 127.83	Yen (100 units)	₹ 59.50
Euro	₹ 110.36		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$87.33*
-3.37%
*Rate as of Jun 12



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)

Petrol*	₹110.89	₹ -0.08%
Diesel*	₹98.80	₹ -0.07%

*Rates as of Jun 13 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 21300 - 22000
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12500 - 14000
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17300 - 18000
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9200 - 10000

*Rates as on Jun 11

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 639
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 707

*Average rates as on Jun 12

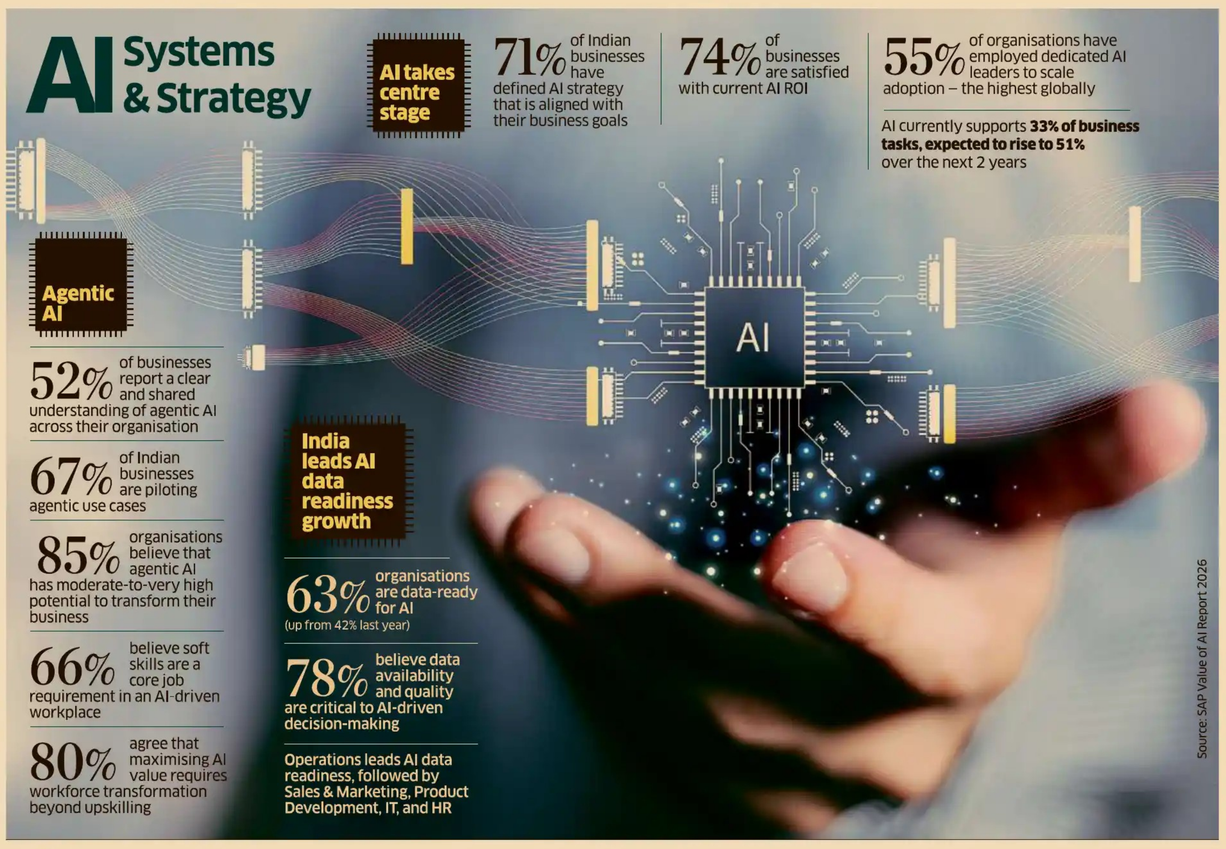
Agentic chaos looms as firms deploy AI agents sans governance

Deploying AI agents without proper guardrails can result in lack of control over data access

UMA KANNAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

Every organisation now talks about deploying thousands of AI agents, which set goals and make decisions on their own, but what if there are no proper guardrails or audits? This will lead to chaos and companies' costs will go up at the same time. Firms have now realised that it is not about the numbers — even if one agent is deployed, it should deliver value for the investment. At the same time, there are growing concerns among enterprises that there is little impact when it comes to outcomes. On top of it, trust, security and governance play a very significant role.

From autonomous enterprise and interaction with technology to enterprise software transformation and business outcomes, top executives of SAP, a leader in enterprise applications and business AI, at the company's flagship SAP NOW AI Tour India in Mumbai, recently, discussed the potential opportunities of AI in supporting business tasks, the need to act with greater agility, and how AI is the backbone of the Autonomous Enterprise.


AI Systems & Strategy
AI takes centre stage
71% of Indian businesses have defined AI strategy that is aligned with their business goals
74% of businesses are satisfied with current AI ROI
55% of organisations have employed dedicated AI leaders to scale adoption – the highest globally
AI currently supports 33% of business tasks, expected to rise to 51% over the next 2 years
Agentic AI
52% of businesses report a clear and shared understanding of agentic AI across their organisation
67% of Indian businesses are piloting agentic use cases
85% organisations believe that agentic AI has moderate-to-very high potential to transform their business
66% believe soft skills are a core job requirement in an AI-driven workplace
80% agree that maximising AI value requires workforce transformation beyond upskilling
India leads AI data readiness growth
63% organisations are data-ready for AI (up from 42% last year)
78% believe data availability and quality are critical to AI-driven decision-making
Operations leads AI data readiness, followed by Sales & Marketing, Product Development, IT, and HR
AI
Source: SAP Value of AI Report 2026

> Agents without governance can lead you into a situation where there are different pieces of code and agentic AI that are roaming across your enterprise systems without control over which data they are accessing, and worse, without control over who is able to see that data.

MANOS RAPTOPOULOS
Global President, Customer Success – Europe, APAC, Middle East & Africa, and Member of the Extended Board, SAP SE

Regulating the landscape

"Agents without governance can lead you into a situation where there are different pieces of code and agentic AI that are roaming across your enterprise systems without control over which data they are accessing, and worse, without control over who is able to see that data," Manos Raptopoulos, Global President, Customer Success – Europe, APAC, Middle East & Africa, and Member of the Extended Board, SAP SE, said.

Addressing the gathering, he warned that there is a real danger if you don't govern and regulate your agentic landscape: you end up in a situation of agentic chaos. This is where SAP steps in with the vision of autonomous enterprise, because "we have introduced the concept of a verified agent, so an agent cannot be deployed and cannot have access to an SAP system without first being verified, and there are certain qualities attached to it. One is the quality of observability. You cannot allow an agent to operate on your business data without understanding how the agent presumes. That's the concept of observability."

There is the concept of traceability. An agent is fundamentally different from any other piece of technology, because it can actually act on your system. "Whenever you look back, you need to be able to trace exactly the steps and the reasoning that this agent took in order to make that action," Raptopoulos said, stressing the need for compliance.

If an agent is acting upon a system which holds your financial data, and you use that system in order to report that data to the markets or to your shareholders, your auditor will not allow this agent to be deployed.

If you apply agentic AI and transform processes, you give your company a competitive edge, and that edge actually translates into customer and business value. Every employee equipped with the right agent can increase their productivity, but the moment of trust is very important, Raptopoulos said, adding that in their autonomous enterprise there is always a human in the loop until one makes sure that the agent is performing the task in the way it should be performed.

"You might decide to remove human oversight and render a process completely autonomous, and that puts you in the driver's seat," he said.

The company also released findings that are part of the SAP Value of AI Report 2026, based on a global study conducted in collaboration with Oxford Economics, surveying 2,600 business leaders across 13 countries, including 200 respondents from India.

It found that 55% of organisations have employed dedicated AI leaders to scale adoption — the highest globally. It also pointed out that Indian businesses balance AI optimism with caution, as almost 8 in 10 organisations are not convinced that their upskilling can keep up with AI advancements.

Data quality issues

AI governance remains in focus as businesses say they're not fully ready when it comes to skills (11%) and processes (14%). About 76% of organisations face challenges with incomplete data, while 67% of enterprises struggle with low-quality data.

SAP's vision of the Autonomous Enterprise focuses on helping organisations bring together AI, data, and business processes to drive more-connected, trusted, and responsible business outcomes at scale.

Manoj Swaminathan, General Manager and CPO Business Suite, Finance & Spend, Member of the Extended Board of SAP SE, told *DH* that in terms of frontier models in the market today, there are net new models being created and there are remarkable innovations happening around the reasoning models, which is a new category of specialised language models.

He added that the future is going to be interesting in terms of what these reasoning models can do and it is only going to get better.

Humans and agents working together

Swaminathan also said that when we think about agents and the existing set of AI capabilities that are embedded within the applications, they can't be operating in silos, because a change in finance has an impact possibly somewhere else as well.

Every time we talk about autonomous, an important question that arises is: Are we going to actually remove people or replace them with agents?

Swaminathan said, "Absolutely not! Humans are indeed the ones who are able to actually define the policies that guardrail these assistants based on the data, business situations and events that happen within the four walls of your organisations. Every time we talk about an autonomous domain, like autonomous finance, you have assistants, with a set of agents and every agent having skills that give you not just automation, but intelligence and optimisation as well, so you could realise unique value with AI," he concluded.

B'luru startup turns wellness into a one-shot habit

TEJASWINI S
BENGALURU, DHNS

Roopesh B T (centre), with Bharat Chandra M B (left) and Dr Yadu Nandan

What began as conversations among three professionals with backgrounds spanning agriculture, food technology and entrepreneurship has turned into a bet on making wellness products easier to consume. Bengaluru-based Activ Hippy, a functional wellness startup, was built on the observation that consumers often struggle to sustain wellness routines because existing formats can feel medicinal, inconvenient or difficult to follow consistently. Its answer is a portfolio of concentrated wellness and energy shots designed for quick, routine consumption.

The idea took shape when Roopesh BT, who spent nearly two decades in FMCG and beverages, joined Bharat Chandra MB, a food technologist with formulation experience, and Dr Yadu Nandan, a veterinarian and entrepreneur who had earlier built and exited a business. Incorporated in 2025, the company spent more than a year developing formulations before launching products earlier this year.

Activ Hippy began as a bootstrapped venture, investing about Rs 1 crore in R&D and initial production, before raising another Rs 1.5 crore from friends and family.

Since launch, Activ Hippy has reached around 25,000 customers, according to Roopesh, with adoption ranging from first-time trials to repeat purchases.

The company first launched online and has since expanded into offline retail, targeting consumers in the 18-40 age group, particularly Gen Z and younger urban consumers. Customer acquisition cost currently stands at nearly 150% of product price.

The company is currently prioritising customer acquisition and category awareness over profitability, with marketing efforts spanning digital campaigns, consumer sampling, sports partnerships and corporate outreach.

According to Roopesh, the wellness and energy category today spans multiple positioning strategies, from synthetic and performance-led energy brands such as Red Bull, Monster, Predator, and Hell, to newer functional and clean-label wellness brands including TrueBasics, Fast&Up, AS-IT-IS Nutrition, Wellbeing Nutrition and Supply6.

Activ Hippy, however, is seeking to position itself differently. While the products are built around functional benefits, the founders said the brand is being developed around a lifestyle-led and natural proposition, with an emphasis on making wellness products part of everyday consumption rather than exercise- or performance-led use cases. "We want people to use it on a day-to-day basis. It should become a part of their lifestyle. We are not targeting only high-energy or exercise moments," Roopesh said.

While larger and more established brands already operate across energy, supplements, Roopesh said, "Overshadowing may happen, but the category is huge and there is enough space for many players."

Looking ahead, the startup plans to pursue a larger external fundraise to accelerate expansion and support future product launches. Fresh capital would be directed towards scaling distribution, increasing offline presence, strengthening brand visibility and expanding customer reach.

Alongside growth initiatives, Activ Hippy is continuing research to reduce preservative dependence and improve shelf life. Its product pipeline currently includes 8-10 products across categories such as heart health, hydration and probiotics, as the startup looks to widen its presence in functional wellness over the next few years.

Activ Hippy expects to achieve margins by the end of its first year and targets break-even in the following year, while continuing to prioritise category creation and customer adoption.

NSE set to file IPO papers soon, say sources

NEW DELHI, PTI: The IPO of the NSE is set to move a step closer, with the stock exchange expected to file its preliminary papers with Sebi next week, sources said. This comes after NSE's board approved the proposed IPO on February 6.

The public issue will be entirely an offer for sale (OFS), with no fresh issue component.

According to people familiar with the development, the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) is likely to be filed on June 15 or June 16.

DH INTERVIEW

'We are putting more human intelligence than AI in our printers'

Often associated with printers, Epson today sees itself as a much broader imaging and technology company, with interests spanning education, industrial printing, robotics, projection systems and manufacturing solutions. As the company looks to accelerate growth in India, it is betting on emerging segments such as digital textile printing, label printing and automation, while continuing to strengthen its core home, office and education businesses. In an interview with **Hrithik Kiran Bagade** of *DH*, Epson India President **Samba Moorthy** discusses the company's growth plans, the shift towards sustainable digital printing technologies, and India's importance in Epson's global strategy. Edited Excerpts:

Share a brief overview of Epson's journey in India.

Epson has been present in India for over three-and-a-half decades. While many know us primarily as a printer company, our portfolio extends far beyond printing. We operate across imaging and imaging solutions, helping customers bring images and content to life in different forms — from retail transactions and signage to textile printing, art displays, and projection systems.

Our offerings range from compact printing solutions to industrial-scale applications, with sustainability at the core of everything we do. Power efficiency, compact product design, and responsible material usage have been part of Epson's philosophy since inception. Today, our presence spans home and office printing, enterprise solutions, industrial printing, education through projectors and displays, robotics for manufacturing, and printhead solutions that support industrial OEMs developing their own products.

How are Epson's key business verticals performing?

Education remains one of our most-important segments, alongside the home market. We also have a strong presence in government, enterprise and corporate printing, manufacturing, textiles, and industrial applications. Some of our emerging businesses — including robotics, textile printing, label printing, and large-format printing — have grown at over 30% annually in recent years, albeit from a smaller base. Over the last five years, our overall CAGR has exceeded 14%. We closed FY25 with revenue of around Rs 2,900 crore and are targeting growth of 17-18% over the medium term. Much of that growth will come from high-growth segments such as textiles, labels, robotics, and large-format printing, while our core home, office, and education businesses continue to grow steadily.

Is industrial printing, particularly textile and label printing, the next major growth driver for Epson?

Textiles are certainly one of the biggest opportunities for us. Even today, more than 80% of textile printing is done through conventional rotary printing. It is similar to where photo printing was two decades ago, before digital technologies became mainstream. Digital direct-to-fabric printing offers significant advantages. It enables short-run jobs, distributed production, lower fabric wastage, and reduced energy consumption. It also helps minimise environmental concerns associated with chemicals and wastewater generated by traditional processes. This aligns closely with Epson's sustainability-focused approach. At the same time, digital penetration in textile printing remains below 20%, creating a substantial growth opportunity. India is both a large consumer and exporter of textiles, making it an attractive market for this transition.

Have you already established a presence in this market?

Yes. We entered this segment about four years ago and have built a meaningful base. Growth continues to exceed 30-40% annually. The market includes global competitors from Europe and China, as well as Indian manufacturers, but the overall opportunity remains significant. We believe that a large portion of textile printing will gradually shift toward digital technologies over the coming years. It may not completely replace conventional printing, but the transition could eventually account for 60-70% of the market.

What exactly does Epson offer in textile printing?

Traditional textile printing relies on screens and rotary systems that are economical only at large volumes, often requiring thousands of metres of production for a single design. Digital textile printing works differently. Fabric is fed into a large-format printer, designs are created on a computer, and the printing is done directly onto the fabric. This eliminates the need for screens and allows customers to print even very small quantities efficiently. Multiple designs can be printed in a single production run, providing much greater flexibility and reducing waste.

Does the same approach apply to industrial and label printing?

Yes. Label printing follows a similar digital approach and is another area where we have made strong progress. Applications include labels for water bottles, food products, and consumer goods. Our industrial portfolio is typically configured around printer platforms with different printhead combinations — ranging from 8-head to 64-head systems. In total, we offer roughly 14-15 configurations, depending on ink requirements and customer-specific needs. Software integration and customisation are also important components of these solutions.

What are Epson's plans in robotics and projection solutions?

In robotics, we continue to expand our six-axis and SCARA robot offerings for manufacturing applications. A key focus is making automation more accessible for small and medium enterprises, where the challenge is often not just the hardware cost but also implementation, software integration, and process optimisation.

We are working towards offering more complete solution packages for SMEs. We have also launched educational initiatives with students and institutions to build awareness and skills around robotics, helping create a future-ready workforce.

In the projection business, education remains our primary focus. Projectors continue to play a central role in classrooms, while immersive visual experiences in museums and public spaces have also gained momentum.

How is Epson approaching AI integration?

Right now, we are putting more human intelligence than AI in our printers. That said, we are incorporating advanced technologies in areas such as colour management, colour correction, image accuracy, and workflow optimisation, particularly in large-format and textile printing applications.

Why some income tax returns get picked for scrutiny

Every year, crores of taxpayers file their income tax returns. In most cases, the return is processed, refund is issued wherever applicable, and the matter ends there. Only a very small percentage, generally less than 1% of the returns filed, are selected for scrutiny, where the Tax Department verifies the return in detail.

However, taxpayers should understand that scrutiny selection is increasingly data-driven. The Department has access to information from Form 26AS, AIS, TIS, TDS returns, SFT reports, bank data, property registration data, mutual fund and share transaction data, foreign remittance data and other third-party information. The return filed by the taxpayer is compared with this information.

Broadly, scrutiny cases may arise in two ways. The first is compulsory scrutiny. The second is risk-based scrutiny.

CBDT, in its recently-issued guidelines for compulsory selection of returns for scrutiny, has mentioned specific categories such as search cases, survey cases, reassessment cases, cases where exemption is claimed by trusts or institutions despite cancellation or non-approval of registration, cases involving recurring additions in earlier years above specified limits, and cases where specific information regarding tax evasion is received from investigation, intelligence, law enforcement or regulatory agencies.

For a normal salaried taxpayer, pensioner, investor, landlord, professional or small business owner, scrutiny is more likely to arise through risk-based selection. In such cases, the common issues are mismatches in data or incomplete reporting of income and transactions.

For example, interest income appearing in AIS may not have been offered in the return. Dividend income may be missed because no tax was deducted. Capital gains from shares, mutual funds or property may not match with broker statements, AIS or Form 26AS. A property sale may be reported by the buyer through TDS, but the seller may not have properly disclosed capital gains. Foreign assets, ESOPs, RSUs, foreign bank accounts or foreign income may not have been reported in the relevant schedule.

B E KUMAR PRASAD
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT & PARTNER, BALAKRISHNA AND CO

High-value transactions can also attract attention, especially when they are not consistent with the income declared. Purchase or sale of property, large cash deposits, high credit card payments, foreign travel, overseas remittances or large investments may raise questions if the source is not properly explained.

Taxpayers should also be careful while reporting exempt income and claiming deductions. Claiming agricultural income, gifts, inheritance, exempt capital gains, maturity proceeds, HRA, donations, housing loan interest, insurance, medical expenditure or capital gains exemption under Sections such as 54 or 54EC is not wrong, if the claim is genuine. However, if such claims are unusually large compared to the taxpayer's income profile, they may invite a notice or clarification.

Today, scrutiny assessments are conducted through the faceless assessment system. Notices, replies, documents and explanations are generally handled through the income tax portal. Therefore, the quality of written reply and documentary evidence becomes important.

The best way to reduce unnecessary scrutiny risk is to file a complete and accurate return. Before filing, taxpayers should compare AIS, TIS and Form 26AS with Form 16, bank statements, interest certificates, dividend statements, capital gains reports, property documents, rent details and foreign income records.

Scrutiny is not something to fear, but it should not be taken casually. A properly reconciled return, complete disclosure and good documentation are the best protections against avoidable tax notices. This is the tax filing season, prevention is better than cure.

SpaceX's IPO success may rub off on Mukesh Ambani

While Ambani wants to get Jio listed, tight conditions at home pose a challenge

ANDY MUKHERJEE
BLOOMBERG OPINION

The insatiable investor demand for Elon Musk's SpaceX will be music to the ears of another billionaire half a world away.

In India, Mukesh Ambani's digital empire is headed for an initial public offering expected to be the biggest in the nation's history. Until recently, the tycoon's team may have wondered if the knock-on effects of the Iran war would choke the liquidity required for Jio Platforms Ltd's IPO. But with global institutions writing $10 billion checks for Musk's rockets and satellites, it's clear there is no dearth of demand for mega-tech; or for tech-adjacent businesses like Ambani's data carriage, e-commerce, and media play.

Nor is this euphoria a flash in the pan. The momentum sparked by Alphabet Inc.'s upsized $85 billion equity raise — with OpenAI and possibly Meta Platforms Inc. next in line — suggests the party is far from over.

At its core, Jio is a telecom juggernaut with 525 million subscribers. Were the staggering volume of data they guzzle in a year to be represented by the storage capacity of high-end iPhones, the resulting stack of devices laid on top of one another would leave the earth's atmosphere. With customers paying Rs 214 ($2.25) a month on average, Jio garners $15 billion in operational revenue, at a 52% Ebitda (Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization) margin. Street estimates for its worth are clustered around $130 billion.

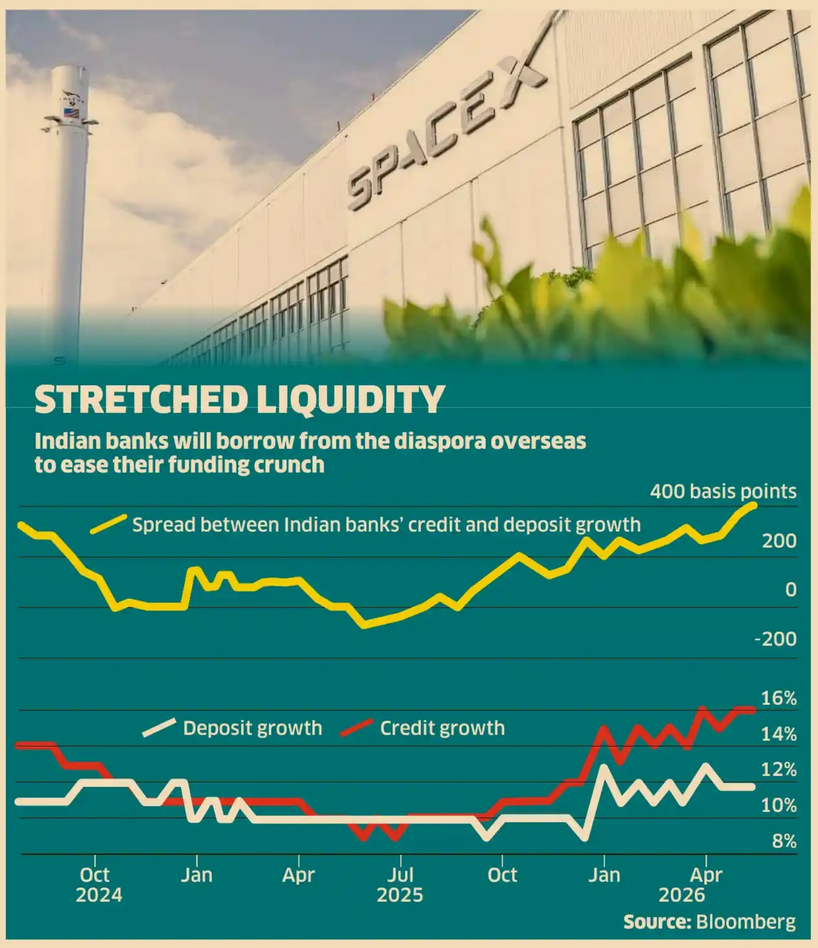
But realising a market price that validates that figure is tricky. Jio is fundamentally an emerging-market story, and global investors have recently been pulling money out of the asset class, wary of stretched valuations. India has been particularly badly hit, with foreigners dumping more than $37 billion of equities over the past year. While Ambani wants to get Jio listed this year, tight financial conditions at home pose a challenge.

Jio's marquee Silicon Valley backers such as Google and Meta came in during the 2020 pandemic when digitisation was the craze. Six years later, their attention — and that of global hot money — is fixated on artificial intelligence. Ambani's ambition of providing low-cost AI products to enterprises and consumers via a partnership with Mark Zuckerberg's Meta may well become a future revenue source for Jio. Pushing out AI-generated mythological and fantasy content via its media outlets could be another. However, this isn't the kind of AI innovation that currently excites big-ticket international investors.

That leaves Ambani's IPO, the first from his sprawling conglomerate in over two decades, largely to the appetite of domestic savers. And his isn't the only one. Quick-commerce company Zepto Ltd. has filed updated paperwork for a $1 billion issue. An asset manager, a lender against gold, and the country's largest stock exchange are all lining up to raise equity. Can local capital carry them past the finish line?

This is where the Reserve Bank of India enters the play as a deus ex machina. In a bid to shore up a drooping currency, the RBI recently announced it would absorb the hedging costs for banks raising deposits from the Indian diaspora. If, say, $50 billion rushes inward through this channel, it will inject rupee liquidity into a parched banking system. Even after the central bank mops up some of the excess, the residual windfall is likely to gravitate toward the stock market. So yes, local institutions and retail savers may have the stomach for Jio's $4 billion float.

Yet, this engineered triumph is precisely where Ashish Gupta urges extreme caution. The former Credit Suisse analyst, whose 2012 "House of Debt" report became a prescient warning of the bankruptcies that followed India Inc.'s unsustainable leverage, wants investors to reach back into their memory once again.



Writing recently in Livemint, Gupta reminds us that massive, record-breaking IPOs have historically presaged market tops. The now-independent analyst points to a chilling pattern: Mukesh Ambani's younger brother Anil's 2008 Reliance Power Ltd. IPO hit the market weeks before the benchmark Nifty 50 Index shed half its value over the following months; Coal India Ltd.'s massive 2010 float preceded a near-30% correction; and globally, Visa Inc.'s 2008 debut landed right before the S&P 500 collapsed by 48%. Agricultural Bank of China's 2010 listing came with a surge — followed by a long slide in the Shanghai Composite Index.

The logic is straightforward: Mega-IPOs act as a structural liquidity drain, sucking vital capital out of secondary markets. A single quarter's equity issuance absorbing a meaningful fraction of annual deposit formation is a system-wide hazard. The danger is particularly elevated in India, where the banking system's 12% deposit growth is 4 percentage points slower than credit expansion.

While tapping the diaspora's funds might successfully bridge the funding gap for the large upcoming IPOs, Gupta's data shows that when equity supply turns into a gush, the broader pool of market liquidity tends to dry up. When the primary market claims the final dregs of investable cash, gravity asserts itself on the secondary market. Between Musk's rockets and Jio's telecom-and-media behemoth in India, the air at the top is getting incredibly thin.

WEEK AHEAD

Markets likely to witness uptrend this week

Crude oil has fallen sharply to around $88 per barrel, its lowest in two months

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities may witness an uptrend this week as easing concerns surrounding the US-Iran conflict improve global risk sentiment. Crude oil has fallen sharply to around $88/bbl (as of Friday evening) — its lowest in nearly two months — after reports indicated that the US and Iran are close to a deal to end the war. This reflects a sharp cooling in tensions from the $97 levels seen earlier last week. However, given how often this conflict has seen hopes rise and fade, markets are likely to stay cautious until a formal agreement is signed and holds. A durable resolution would be a strong positive catalyst — easing crude prices, supporting the rupee, and improving overall sentiment.

Earlier, the European Central Bank raised interest rates by 25 basis points to 2.25% — its first hike since 2023 — citing inflation risks from rising energy costs linked to the Iran conflict and Strait of Hormuz disruptions. This is a sign that the energy shock is now feeding into global monetary policy. Markets will also watch the US Fed's FOMC meeting, where rates are expected to remain unchanged, but commentary could turn more hawkish — with the Fed signalling it wants the oil-driven inflation shock to fade before considering any rate cuts. US CPI data, due before the meeting, could further influence this tone. In India, May CPI and WPI inflation data will also be closely watched, particularly amid elevated crude prices and rupee weakness, as any upside surprise could temper rate cut expectations for the RBI.

Last week, the Nifty 50 gained 1.1% week-on-week, while the Nifty Midcap 100 gained 0.02% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 advanced 0.5%. Among sectors, Nifty Private Bank was the top gainer, rising 5.1%, followed by Bank Nifty, which gained 4.2%. On the downside, Nifty IT and Nifty Metal were the worst performers, falling 5.1% and 4.4%, respectively.

Crude oil remained the key variable driving market sentiment during the week. Brent swung sharply — touching nearly $97/bbl before pulling back to around $88, its lowest in nearly two months, on growing hopes of a US-Iran resolution. With crude now sustaining below $90, India could see meaningful relief on the current account, inflation and the fiscal deficit simultaneously. The rupee has found some stability around Rs 95/USD, offering a degree of comfort after last month's record lows, though a durable recovery will depend on crude holding these lower levels and FII outflows abating.

Banking stocks remained in focus following the RBI's twin forex measures aimed at boosting dollar inflows and stabilising the rupee. Banks can now raise FCNR(B) deposits (3-5 year tenor) and swap them into rupees with the RBI at zero hedging cost, prompting most large banks to raise FCNR(B) deposit rates from 3-4% to 6-7% — making this an attractive option for NRI depositors. Separately, banks can hedge eligible overseas borrowings (ECBs) with the RBI at a flat 1.5% versus the usual 3.5-4%, cutting borrowing costs by 200-250 basis points. Together, these measures could bring in $40-50 billion of forex inflows over FY27, with banks having a large NRI customer base.

In a significant energy policy move, the government waived excise duty on higher ethanol-petrol blends (E22 to E30, containing 22-30% ethanol), having already hit its E20 target five years early and saved over Rs 1.84 lakh crore in forex since 2014. This is a structural push to make higher blends commercially viable for refiners, while supporting ethanol producers, sugar companies and farmers. The government also launched E85 fuel — 85% ethanol, priced Rs 20/litre cheaper than regular petrol — with plans to scale to 5,000 outlets by 2027, a meaningful step toward cutting India's crude import dependence.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, MOFSL)

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Privi Speciality Chemicals (ID: PRIVISCL) — BUY
Upside +13%** | Last close ₹3,454 | Target: ₹3,900*

Cummins India (ID: CUMMINSIND) — BUY
Upside +17%** | Last close ₹5,623 | Target: ₹6,600*

Nuvama Wealth (ID: NUVAMA) — BUY
Upside +17%** | Last close ₹1,588 | Target: ₹1,860*

JSW Infrastructure (ID: JSWINFRA) — BUY
Upside +24%** | Last close ₹291 | Target: ₹360*

State Bank of India (ID: SBIN) — BUY
Upside +28%** | Last close ₹1,016 | Target: ₹1,300*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

DH REVIEW

Xiaomi 17T: Compact premium phone with an impressive camera

ROHIT K V N
BENGALURU, DHNS

Last week, the Xiaomi 17T hit stores in India, available in two variants — 12GB RAM + 256GB storage and 12GB RAM + 512GB storage — for Rs 59,999 and Rs 64,999, respectively.

Design, build quality and display

The new Xiaomi 17T retains the design elements of the original Xiaomi 17 launched in March. It flaunts a classic candy bar design with a compact form factor. The flat rail is very easy to hold and operate, and to text using just one hand.

It has a plastic-based frame, and the back cover is made of glass-like fibre. Besides the black colour, it is also available in violet and blue.

The display features Corning's Gorilla Glass 7i shield, in addition to a second layer of plastic-based screen guard on the top.

Further, the device comes with an IP68 water-and-dust rating, meaning the device can survive a dip in freshwater for up to 1.5 metres for close to 30 minutes. Additionally, the company offers a free silicone case in the box.

On the front, it sports a compact 6.59-inch full HD display with 3,500 nits of peak brightness, 120Hz refresh rate, and pixel density of 460 ppi.

It also features TÜV Rheinland certifications for low blue light, flicker-free and circadian-friendly use. It is perfect for content consumption and reading e-books with less strain on the eyes. When put to the max brightness, the screen is legible to read messages or watch videos with less hassle outdoors.

The device comes with an AI face unlock, dual-SIM slots, Wi-Fi 6E, Bluetooth 6.0, NFC, double stereo speakers with a Dolby Atmos sound system, and an in-screen fingerprint sensor.

SPEC SHEET
Display: 6.59" FHD+, 120Hz, 3,500 nits, Gorilla Glass 7i
Processor: MediaTek Dimensity 8500-Ultra | 12GB LPDDR5X RAM
Storage: 256GB / 512GB UFS 4.1
Camera: Leica triple-camera setup – 50MP main (OIS, f/1.7) + 50MP 5x periscope telephoto + 12MP ultra-wide; 32MP front camera
Battery: 6,500mAh, 67W fast charging, 22.5W reverse charging
Price:
Rs 59,999 (12GB+256GB)
Rs 64,999 (12GB+512GB)

Performance

The 17T is powered by 4nm class MediaTek Dimensity 8500-Ultra, Mali-G720 MC8 GPU, NPU 880, proprietary Xiaomi 3D IceLoop system, and 12GB LPDDR5X RAM, with 256GB/512GB storage (UFS 4.1) options.

Whether it's graphics-rich games or running GenAI applications, the phone waltzes through the day without breaking a sweat. It runs Android 16-based HyperOS 6, with an easy-to-navigate user interface.

With a 6500mAh silicon-carbon battery, the device can easily last more than a day under normal usage with mixed dependence on Wi-Fi and cellular internet.

It supports 67W HyperCharge capability, and can go from 0-100% capacity in little over an hour. It also supports 22.5W wired reverse-charging.

Photography

The Xiaomi 17T boasts of a Leica camera system featuring a main 50MP sensor (f/1.7 aperture, OIS), with a 12MP ultra-wide-angle camera and a 50MP 5x periscope telephoto lens, with an LED flash on the back.

It takes brilliant photos in all lighting conditions. The colours of the subject, be it a human face, flowers or pets, appear vibrant with sharp details.

In night mode, it does a fine job of getting neat pictures with less noise. It nicely balances the light being emitted from street lamps and neon bulbs, and ensures that the darkness of the sky and the true essence of the night are preserved in the frame.

The device supports Leica Live Portrait, which adds natural depth and a cinematic look for the subject, with a bokeh effect in the background.

It takes sharp photos with 5X optical zoom, and can digitally zoom up to 120X. That said, it works fine with less loss of quality till 30X, but beyond that, the photos begin to accumulate noise.

The main camera can record really stable 4K videos at 60 fps.

On the front, it houses a 32MP camera, which takes nice selfies in sunlight and records decent-quality 4K videos at 30 fps.

Final thoughts

The Xiaomi 17T excels with strong performance, dependable all-day battery life, and most-notably, its impressive camera hardware, backed by capable photography tools, makes it stand out.

Mcap of eight of top-10 most-valued firms surges

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most-valued firms surged by Rs 1.90 lakh crore last week, with ICICI Bank stealing the show, in tandem with a rally in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,284.61 points or 1.73% and the NSE Nifty surged 256.2 points or 1%.

"Indian equity markets ended a volatile week on a strong note, snapping a two-week losing streak amid improving global sentiment and supportive measures from the RBI aimed at attracting foreign currency inflows," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Investor confidence improved on optimism surrounding a potential US–Iran peace deal, which raised hopes of easing geopolitical tensions and stabilising energy markets, he added.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and Hindustan Unilever were the winners, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and LIC faced erosion from their market capitalisation.

ICICI Bank added Rs 56,223 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 9,61,297.77 crore.

HDFC Bank's market valuation jumped Rs 38,571.11 crore to Rs 11,89,314.42 crore, and that of SBI surged Rs 36,137.87 crore to Rs 9,38,661.50 crore.

Woman killed after bungee jump crew fails to attach rope

RIO DE JANEIRO, AFP: A young woman died in Brazil after being launched off a bridge for a rope jump without a safety cord, police said Sunday.

In videos of the Saturday accident circulating online, two men hoist the 21-year-old above their heads and launch her off Skeleton Bridge, in the interior of Sao Paulo state, while onlookers realize there is no safety mechanism attached and shout "Guys, the cord!"

"The safety equipment was not properly secured at the time of the jump. The victim did not survive the fall," police said in a statement to AFP.

Three men were arrested for "homicide with dolus eventualis" -- meaning they were aware of the risk of death but went ahead anyway. "Investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances and establish liability," said the police.

Local media identified the victim as Maria Eduarda Rodrigues de Freitas, and said she fell around 40 metres (131 feet) to her death.

Shortly before the accident, de Freitas posted an image of the site on Instagram captioned: "Who was the crazy person who let me come jump off a bridge???"

Previous videos of the extreme sport at the bridge, carried out by the Entre Cordas company, show participants with a thick safety cord around their waists as they are launched off.

Rope jumping differs from bungee jumping in that it uses a less elastic cord, meaning participants swing back and forth rather than bouncing at the end of the jump.

Skydiving plane crash kills 12 in Missouri

WASHINGTON, AFP: A skydiving plane crashed Sunday in the central US state of Missouri, killing 12 people on board, emergency responders told AFP.

The crash occurred near Butler Memorial Airport, about 60 miles (95 kilometers) south of Kansas City, said Dennis Jacobs, director of Bates County Emergency Management Agency.

The private plane, carrying 11 skydivers and a pilot, turned around for an unknown reason after taking off around 11:30 am and crashed near a highway, prompting authorities to close the road, local media reports said.

Emergency crews and officials with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) are on the scene, the reports said.

Italy's Meloni faces far-right dilemma

ROME, AP: In a packed auditorium steps from the Vatican, Roberto Vannacci - the former Italian army general known to supporters as "Il Generale" - is rallying followers of his fledgling party, casting himself as an outsider while reshaping Italy's right and challenging Premier Giorgia Meloni.

Vannacci's "Futuro Nazionale" party is injecting new uncertainty into conservative bloc that has underpinned Meloni's government.

Trump says Iran deal 'hours' away despite Beirut attack

US Prez blames Israel for delaying signing of agreement

WASHINGTON, AFP

US President Donald Trump insisted on Sunday that a deal to end the Middle East war was just "hours" away, angrily blaming Israel for delaying its signing with an airstrike on Beirut that drew threats of retaliation from Iran.

Trump has pledged that the agreement will be signed Sunday -- his 80th birthday -- while Tehran has declined to offer a clear timeline, though both sides have signalled that diplomatic channels remained open.

Tehran has long demanded that any agreement to halt the war must include the parallel conflict in Lebanon, where Israel has been pursuing a campaign against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

But after days of momentum building towards a deal, Israel's strike on Sunday in Beirut's southern suburbs -- a Hezbollah stronghold -- prompted Iran's chief negotiator to question the point of continuing peace talks.

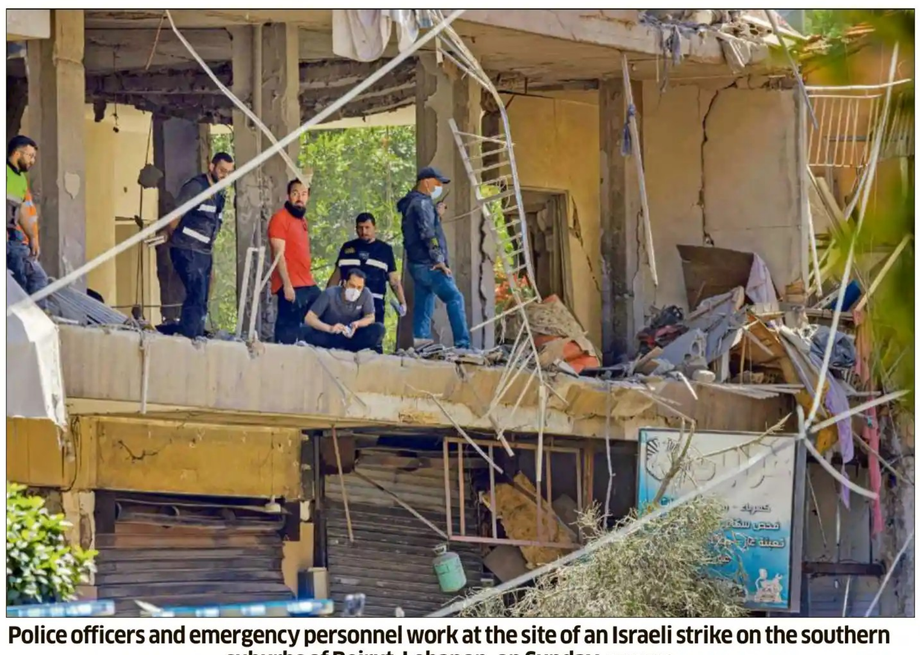
The attack "showed that the United States either lacks the will to implement its commitments or lacks the ability to do so", Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on X.

"If you do not have the will or the ability to fulfil your commitments, then there is no point in talking about continuing down this path," he added.

Trump -- who over weeks of negotiations has repeatedly declared an accord with Iran was all but concluded -- told the US news outlet Axios that the strike "delayed the signing".

"It was supposed to be now. Now it is scheduled for a few hours from now," Trump said in a phone call, while fuming at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Why did Bibi have to do a fucking attack?" he told Axios. "I was so pissed off. I let him know. He has no fucking judgement."



Police officers and emergency personnel work at the site of an Israeli strike on the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, on Sunday. REUTERS

In an earlier social media post, Trump decried the strike, saying the Iran deal would "bring peace to the region, including to Lebanon, and all sides should stand down".

The Iranian Fars news agency quoted "a source close to Iran's negotiating team" as saying just before the Israeli strike that even if Tehran's position was incorporated into the deal, "no agreement will be signed within the timeframe announced by Trump".

The last time Israel hit the Beirut suburbs, it sparked one of the strongest jolts yet to a ceasefire that has largely held since April, with Iran firing off a retaliatory missile barrage and Israel responding with strikes.

Flights cancelled at Iran airports

Iran's state broadcaster said on Sunday that flights at airports in the west of the country were cancelled, after Tehran warned it would respond to an Israeli attack on Beirut.
"Flights from airports in the western part of the country have been cancelled until further notice," state television reported following the warning from Iran's top security body.

Taiwan spy firm opens tip portal for Chinese nationals

TAIPEI, AP: Taiwan's intelligence agency said on Sunday it is establishing an information-reporting channel for Chinese nationals to offer tips securely, at a time when tensions between Beijing and the self-ruled island remain elevated.

In a statement, Taiwan's National Security Bureau said they are launching a webpage that will act as a secure channel for Chinese nationals to provide intelligence-related information, saying that an increasing number of people have recently approached relevant agencies in Taiwan wishing to "provide various types of information."

"In recent years, China's economy has faced mounting difficulties, while political control has remained tight," the statement said. "Coupled with a growing range of social and livelihood-related problems, these conditions have fuelled public discontent."

Taiwan officials said the move was made in reference to practices adopted by intelligence agencies in the US, the UK and Israel.

Last year, the CIA released Mandarin-language videos on social media inviting disgruntled Chinese officials to contact them and share information.

China had earlier said it launched an online platform to encourage reporting of "Taiwan independence" activities, aiming at holding "separatists" accountable.

China and Taiwan split in 1949 as a result of a civil war. For decades, China has seen Taiwan as its own territory.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

A woman embraces a firefighter as people take part in a silent walk in memory of the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire on the ninth anniversary of the Grenfell Tower disaster, in London, on Sunday. REUTERS

US singer Oliver Tree was on deadly Brazil helicopter flight

Oliver Tree

▸ American singer-songwriter Oliver Tree, who was in Brazil on a world tour, was aboard one of the helicopters that crashed Sunday in Rio de Janeiro, leaving all occupants dead, a police source told AFP.

The alternative singer and internet personality is listed as one of six people on the manifests of the two aircraft shared by the source, who said the victims could not be formally identified yet as they were badly burned in the crash.

The passengers alongside the singer included a Brazilian music producer, Argentine video director and Argentine YouTuber Gaspar Prim, known online as "Gaspi."

Two helicopters collided mid-air on Sunday morning in the western suburb of Recreio dos Bandeirantes before plummeting into the parking lot of an electric car dealership, setting ablaze around 20 cars, according to firefighters.

One of the helicopters was carrying five people, and the other only the pilot. There were no survivors.

Nepal FM in China to reset ties

▸ Nepal Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal arrived in China on Sunday for talks with top Chinese officials amid expectations of a reset in bilateral ties following the RSP's massive victory in the Himalayan nation earlier this year, reports PTI from Beijing.

Khanal's four-day visit comes a week after his trip to India, his first after the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) government took charge in March this year, ending the over-decade-long rule of Nepalese communist parties.

During his stay here, Khanal will hold talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, and meet high-level Chinese dignitaries, according to foreign ministry officials on both sides.

"China attaches great importance to China-Nepal relations, and will take the visit as an opportunity to work with Nepal's new government to enhance political mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation, pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and make greater progress in China-Nepal strategic partnership of cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told media here on Friday.

Britain detains sanctioned oil tanker of 'Russia'

LONDON, AP

Armed British forces boarded and detained a sanctioned tanker Sunday that is suspected of being part of the Russian "shadow fleet," shipping oil in violation of international sanctions over Moscow's war on Ukraine, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday.

Royal Marine commandos rappelled from helicopters onto the vessel, the Smyrtos, in the English Channel, in what the country's Defence Ministry called "the first UK-led operation of its kind."

The vessel will be held and monitored off the south coast of England for investigation, according to the Defence Ministry. The operation was carried out "in close coordination" with French authorities, who have previously intercepted a number of vessels linked to the "shadow fleet."

"This operation delivers yet another blow to Russia and reminds those fueling Putin's war in Ukraine that they cannot hide," Starmer said.

Russia is believed to be using a fleet of hundreds of ships to evade sanctions over its war against Ukraine.

Sailing under a Cameroon flag, the Smyrtos left the Russian Baltic port of Ust-Luga on June 5, destined for Port Said, Egypt, according to the MarineTraffic website.

UK authorities said that such operations were "directly bearing down on the resources sustaining Russia's aggression in Ukraine and reducing its capacity to threaten security across Europe and beyond."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Starmer and the British people for their "principled resolve."

"It was Russia's hubris, fueled by high oil and gas revenues, that paved the way for this war, and every decision by partners that deprives Russia of money also limits the war itself," Zelenskyy said on X.

Clashes erupt in Geneva ahead of G7 summit

Police use tear gas and water cannons after demonstrators throw bottles, stones

GENEVA, AFP

Clashes broke out Sunday between protesters and police in Geneva, including near the United Nations headquarters, a day before the G7 summit opens in nearby Evian in France, AFP journalists saw.

Small groups of protesters, many dressed in black and wearing masks, threw bottles, stones, pieces of cement and firecrackers at the police, who responded with tear gas and water cannons.

Several buildings were targeted, including the offices of the UN's International Telecommunications Union and a nearby premises of multinational accounting and consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Protesters were not able to get close to the UN's European headquarters, located across the square, which had been heavily secured with large water cannon trucks parked in front.

Journalists inside the building heard explosions, numerous police sirens and the continuous drone of helicopters circling overhead.

The protesters later marched back to the demonstration's starting point, in a park on the shores of Lake Geneva, where clashes with police continued.

The protest against the Group of Seven leaders, who kick off their three-day annual gathering on Monday, had started out peacefully at around 3:30 pm, with demonstrators Waving banners bearing messages such as: "No to the G7 and all imperialist alliances!" and "Abort the G7".

Demonstrators wearing caricature 'big heads' of G7 leaders pose in front of mock trash cans marked 'human rights', 'gender equality' and 'climate' in Publier, eastern France, on Sunday. AFP

Migrants stand in a queue to board buses at the Sherwood Park in Durban on Sunday to travel back to Malawi. South Africa has repatriated 2,745 foreigners in the week after President Cyril Ramaphosa vowed tougher action against illegal immigration. AFP

'Spider-Man of Yemen' dies in fall

▸ A daredevil adventurer known as "The Spider-Man of Yemen" has died after falling into a volcano crater while attempting to climb vertical rock faces without safety equipment, authorities said, reports AP from Cairo.

Al-Qaqa Ibn Antar, 30, was climbing the steep walls of the Hardah Dam volcanic crater in the southern province of Dhale on Friday when he lost his grip and fell into the 120 metre crater, according to the Civil Defence Authority, which posted short video capturing the moment of his fall.

Trump tells Putin he is ready to help end Ukraine conflict

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday that ending the conflict in Ukraine was vital and he was ready to help, Russian news agencies quoted Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov as saying.

"As regards the Ukrainian conflict, Donald Trump again emphasised that a cessation of hostilities was vital," Ushakov said. "He said he was ready to act with European partners and Kyiv, including in talks at the G7 summit," he added, referring to the summit of G7 industrialised countries this week in France.

Ushakov told the journalists that U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who have led U.S.-brokered negotiations aimed at ending the Ukraine war, would soon be undertaking another visit to Russia.

Diplomatic efforts on ending the Ukraine war have stalled as Washington remains focused on the conflict in Iran.

During their phone conversation on Sunday, Trump and Putin discussed the latest diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement on the Iran conflict, Ushakov said. "The situation around the memorandum between the U.S. and Iran was discussed," Ushakov was quoted as saying.

"Donald Trump said an deal was close and he expects that the results of the difficult but ultimately successful negotiations can be made public."

Zelenskyy discusses peace talks in call with US Prez

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday he had spoken to US President Donald Trump and discussed efforts to achieve an end to the more than four-year war, ahead of a G7 meeting in France this week, reports Reuters. Zelenskyy, writing on Telegram, said he had wished Trump a happy 80th birthday and thanked him for the assistance provided by Washington throughout the conflict.

9-yr-old Oz girl shot dead in Pak

▸ A nine-year-old Australian girl of Pakistan origin was killed and her father and brother were critically injured when police personnel opened indiscriminate fire on their car suspecting them to be robbers in Punjab province of Pakistan, police said on Sunday, reports PTI from Lahore.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said incident has caused significant distress to the Australian-Pakistani community.

Yoga, mindfulness incredibly valuable in divided times: Starmer

LONDON, PTI: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed the growing awareness of the close connection between mental and physical health as the 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebrations kick-started in London on Sunday.

Heartfulness UK brought together parliamentarians, diplomats and representatives from diverse communities and faiths for a special event backed by the Ministry of AYUSH and High Commission of India in the UK at Church House in Westminster.

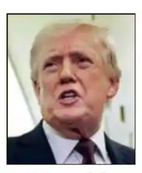
Themed as 'Inner Harmony, Global Peace', the gathering marked among the first in a series of IDY events planned for the UK capital to underscore yoga's profound role in fostering health, balance and intercultural harmony.

"The work of Heartfulness highlights how practices rooted in mindfulness and reflection can be incorporated into daily life," Starmer said.

Trump turns 80, hosts UFC fight night at White House

WASHINGTON, PTI

The White House on Sunday is witnessing a "fight night" in an octagon-shaped cage as the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighters slug it out in the marquee event on the South Lawn on a day President Donald Trump turned 80.



Donald Trump.

The fight night will feature seven bouts with UFC fighters in the Octagon – the cage set up for the event – with over 4,000 "special invitee" spectators cheering at the South Lawns arena and another estimated 75,000 audience gathering on the Ellipse – a 52-acre park south of the White House – where giant screens will carry the proceedings live.

President Trump and his family members will cheer the fighters from the ringside along with Hollywood stars and special invitees.

Rows of bleachers have been built around the Octagon, which sat beneath a massive support structure known as "The Claw", for the president's special guests and members of the military.

Polish media reported that Poland's President Karol Nawrocki, who is visiting the US, will attend the event as a spectator.

The cage fight has drawn sharp criticism from Democrats, who describe it as a garish spectacle at a time when the US is engaged in a war with Iran that has led to high cost of living for ordinary Americans.

"A UFC cage. A Tesla showroom. A gold-encrusted ballroom. Trump has been busy turning the White House front lawn into his billionaire playground. What has he done for American families," said Senator Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat from Massachusetts.

A soldier carries a portable NEROD F5 anti-drone jammer during a dynamic demonstration of military equipment at the Eurosatory defence and security trade show in Paris on Sunday. AFP

Modi pushes defence tech transfer in France talks

PM, Macron agree to elevate ties; discuss Rafale deal

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday told French President Emmanuel Macron that future bilateral defence cooperation should be anchored in maximum local content and manufacturing in India, backed by the transfer of advanced technologies from France to support indigenous production of military hardware.

Modi and Macron agreed to elevate India-France ties to a Special Global Strategic Partnership and discussed the proposed Rs 3.25 lakh crore deal for the procurement of 114 Rafale fighter jets manufactured by Dassault Aviation for the Indian Air Force.

They also discussed cooperation in space situational awareness to strengthen capabilities to track orbital activity, safeguard critical satellite infrastructure, and deepen coordination on space security amid growing strategic competition and military activity in the domain.

PARTNERSHIP

- Ties elevated to Special Global Strategic Partnership
- Rs 3.25 lakh-crore Rafale deal for 114 jets discussed
- Space situational awareness pact to track orbital activity, secure satellites
- General security pact on classified information exchange

Classified information

The two leaders met in Nice on the southeastern coast of France on Sunday and witnessed the signing of a general security agreement on the exchange and protection of classified information. A Letter of Intent was exchanged between the respective space agencies — Isro and CNES — over cooperation in microgravity research and human space exploration.

The two sides announced a declaration of intent to explore cooperation in railways, particularly France's participation in developing India's high-speed rail network.

Modi and Macron agreed to launch an "economic security dialogue", apart from constituting a high-level mechanism for realising the goal of doubling bilateral trade in the next five years, building on the existing "economic and financial dialogue.

Trade between India and France has more than doubled in the last decade to $15.81 billion in 2025-26. It is expected to grow further, with India and the European Union moving closer to signing a Free Trade Agreement by the end of this year.

Pilots' body seeks deeper review of Air India crash report

Calls for simulator tests, says final submission should consider findings

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) on Sunday asked probe agency AAIB to carry out Boeing 787 simulator tests to verify the relation between RAT deployment and fuel control switch movement with respect to the AI171 plane crash last year.

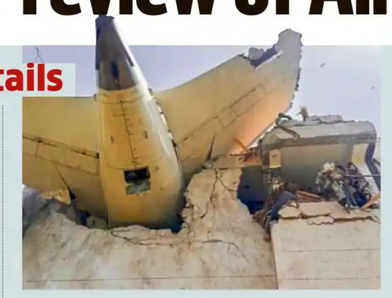
The pilots' grouping's demand comes days after the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) released its interim statement on June 12, saying that significant progress has been made in the probe into the Air India plane crash that killed 260 people on June 12, 2025.

Citing a letter by a law firm representing passengers and families affected by the crash, FIP said RAT deployment might be unrelated to the fuel system changes before the aircraft crashed.

Ram Air Turbine (RAT) deploys automatically in the eventuality of a dual engine failure or total electric or hydraulic failure. It uses wind speed to generate emergency power for the aircraft.

Minute details

- The Federation of Indian Pilots wants the probe agency to carry out Boeing 787 simulator tests
- Boeing 787 simulator tests verify relation between RAT deployment and fuel control switch movement



- Ram Air Turbine, or RAT, deploys automatically in the eventuality of a dual engine failure

In a letter to the AAIB on Sunday, the grouping has sought a comprehensive series of Boeing 787 simulator tests, with an FIP-nominated observer, to independently verify the acceleration recorded in the AAIB preliminary report as well as the relationship between RAT deployment, RAT hydraulic power generation and fuel control switch movement.

The FIP also said the findings should be considered in the final report.

"Survivor reports referring to a loud bang and dimming of cabin lighting, ACARS (Aircraft Communications, Addressing and Reporting System) maintenance messages transmitted between 0753 and 0808 UTC, and the damage visible in the aft EAFR (Enhanced Airborne Flight Recorder) image reproduced in the preliminary report may be examined collectively...," the letter said.

According to FIP, the same should be correlated with recorded aircraft data to establish a coherent sequence of events. AAIB released its preliminary report on July 12, 2025.

Air India's Boeing 787-8 or Dreamliner en route to London Gatwick crashed soon after taking off from Ahmedabad on June 12, 2025, killing 241 people onboard and 19 on the ground.

One passenger survived while all the 12 crew members died in the accident.

CID grills Abhishek, Kunal in signature forgery probe

KOLKATA, PTI: The West Bengal CID on Sunday conducted marathon questioning of Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee and party MLA Kunal Ghosh in connection with its probe into the alleged forgery of legislators' signatures on documents related to the appointment of the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, officials said.

The TMC national general secretary was questioned in the case for the second time in four days.

Banerjee, who appeared before investigators at the CID headquarters 'Bhawani Bhavan' in south Kolkata in the morning, was questioned for more than eight-and-a-half hours before he left for his Kalighat residence in the evening.

Ghosh, the MLA from Beleghata, was interrogated for nearly four hours.

The latest round of questioning comes amid a series of investigations involving the TMC MP, who is facing scrutiny from multiple agencies in different cases.

Trinamool Congress rebels to merge with party that got 822 votes in Tripura

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The 20-odd Trinamool Congress (TMC) rebels will get a new political identity in a 2022-born party — the Nationalist Citizens Party of India — from Tripura that managed just 822 votes (0.03% of the total vote share) in the two seats it contested in the 2023 Assembly elections.

Twenty rebel TMC MPs led by Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar will be merging with the NCPI, a registered but unrecognised party that contested the 2023 Tripura Assembly elections but skipped the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Registered unrecognised political parties are parties that are registered with the Election Commission (EC) but have yet to meet the criteria to be recognised as state or national parties.

Interestingly, the TMC, which forayed into Tripura as part of its plans to expand its national political horizons, managed to secure 22,316 votes (0.88%) while contesting 28 seats in the 2023 Tripura Assembly polls.

In the 2023 elections, NCPI candidates Barheda Tripura had polled 536 votes in the Chawmanu seat, while Jehangir Ali, who fought Kailashaha, managed 286 votes. Ali joined the Congress after the elections.

SOUGATA ROY
TMC MP

"Once you betray the party on whose symbol you were elected, how will you face your constituents? This merger is ridiculous. Who knows NCPI? Can they go to their constituencies and tell people that they are now part of NCPI? This merger reflects the desperation of the traitors to please their BJP masters.

About NCPI

An advertisement seeking objections to the party's registration in October 2022 showed Shewly Kundu as its chairperson. The address given as its headquarters was in West Bengal's Howrah, Kolkata's twin city.

The party contested from four seats in the 2023 Tripura polls, with its candidates finishing either behind NOTA or securing only a few votes more.

The party's campaign posters carried the message: "To save your rights, reject political turncoats. Support social workers, not political personalities", urging voters to press the symbol of a pen nib, which appeared to have been allotted to it as a Registered Unrecognised Political Party.

Its Chawamanu candidate, Barheda, was surprised when PTI contacted him after the merger announcement.

"I contested the polls in 2023. What has happened now, three years later?" he asked, expressing disbelief after being told that a group of Lok Sabha members was joining the party that had fielded him

Barheda said he is a daily wage labourer. "In 2023, a person called Krishna Debbarma reached out to me about the election. So I contested. Many years ago, I was a supporter of the Congress," he said.

(With PTI inputs)

Uddhav meets MPs, fuels 'Operation Tiger' speculation

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday convened a meeting of the party's MPs in Mumbai, with Sanjay Raut, the party's senior leader, insisting that there was no threat to the party's unity.

Uddhav Thackeray

The meeting came amid persistent speculation over "Operation Tiger" — a purported effort to engineer defections from the Uddhav Thackeray-led party and bolster the NDA's numbers in Parliament — in Maharashtra and growing political uncertainty within the Opposition ranks following reports of rebellion in the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC in West Bengal

The attendance at the meeting, however, attracted attention. Of the party's 10 MPs — nine in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha — only five were physically present at Matoshree, the Thackeray family's residence in Bandra. The other five joined virtually through audio or video conferencing.

The meeting gained significance against the backdrop of recurring reports that several Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs were in touch with Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Present at Matoshree were Rajya Sabha member and SS (UBT) parliamentary party leader Sanjay Raut, along with Lok Sabha members Arvind Sawant (Mumbai South), Anil Desai (Mumbai South Central), Sanjay Dina Patil (Mumbai North East), and Rajabhau Waze (Nashik).

Lok Sabha members Sanjay Deshmukh (Yavatmal-Washim), Nagesh Patil Ashtikar (Hingoli), Sanjay Jadhav (Parbhani), Bhausaheb Wakchaure (Shirdi), and Omprakash Nimbalkar (Dharashiv) joined virtually. Worli MLA Aaditya Thackeray was also present.

For months, political circles have been abuzz with reports of six-seven Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs being in contact with Shinde-camp leaders. The speculation fuelled talk of an alleged "Operation Tiger".

The leaders of the ruling Maha Yuti-NDA coalition have largely avoided publicly acknowledging any such exercise.

SPORT

Theerthesh P Shetty clocked 46.59 seconds in the men's 400m event of the Indian Athletics Series in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Theerthesh clears Asian Relays trials with flying colours

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka quarter-miler Theerthesh P Shetty finished second in the men's 400m event of the Indian Athletics Series 10 in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday to confirm his Asian Relays Championships' participation.

The 24-year-old Dakshin Karnataka runner, who set the state 200m record earlier this month, clocked 46.59 seconds behind Kerala's Manu TS (46.24) for a runner-up spot in the one-day event. The result came after the Athletics Federation of India notified the athletes that the top four performers from the event will get priority to start at the event, whose 29-athlete squad was announced at the first week of the month.

A top two finish may help Theerthesh start both the men's and mixed 4x400m relay at the two-day event (June 20-21) in Shangyu, China.

Meanwhile, the women's 100m and 200m races saw Karnataka's Prakruthi R Rao clinch second spots in both events. The state's sprint champion matched her personal best of 11.65 for the third time this season in 100m while she ran 23.75 in the 200m. She, however, is not included in the Asian Relays squad.

High jumper Jese Sandesh cleared 2.13 metre for a second spot in the men's event while state's 400m hurdles champion Deekshita R Gowda clocked 1:00.67 seconds for a third spot in the women's event.

Results: Winners and Karnataka only: 100m: Gitson I (TN) 10.51; 110m hurdles: Manav R (Rai) 13.95; **200m:** Dharmveer Choudhary (Raj) 20.82; **400m:** Manu TS (NCOT) 46.24, 1; Theerthesh P Shetty (Kar) 46.59, 2. **400m hurdles:** Santhosh Kumar T (TN) 49.91; **800m:** Pradeep Senthilkumar (TN) 1:47.09; **High jump:** Basant (NCOB) 2.19, 1; Jesse Sandesh (Kar) 2.13, 2. **Long jump:** David P (NCOB) 8.22. **Triple jump:** Gailey Venister (TN) 16.38.
Women: 100m: Giridharani Ravikumar (TN) 11.61, 1; Prakruthi R Rao (Kar) 11.65, 2; **100m hurdles:** Nandhini K (TN) 13.42. **200m:** Harita Bhadra (Rel) 23.58, 1; Prakruthi R Rao (Kar) 23.75, 2. **400m:** Rashdeep Kaur (JSW) 53.32, **400m hurdles:** Tanu Chaudhary (NCOP) 59.15, 1; Deekshita R Gowda (Kar) 1:00.67, 3. **High jump:** Pooja (Har) 1.81. **Long jump:** Bhavani Yadav (NCOB) 6.61.

ATHLETICS

Yashas, Lokesh included in Neeraj-led CWG squad

Karnataka duo will be part of the 32-member track & field team

BENGALURU, DHNS

Two Karnataka track and field athletes — Yashas Palaksha and Lokesh Sathyanathan — found their place in the 32-member India squad for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July-August, confirmed the Athletics Federation of India on Sunday.

The squad of 22 men and 10 women athletes is spearheaded by two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, who has recovered from a niggle to start his season late.

While 400m hurdler Yashas made a strong impression with the second fastest Indian timing ever at 49.00 seconds to present his case for selection, long jumper Lokesh Sathyanathan was included by the AFI's selection committee despite not breaching the direct qualification mark (8.05 metre) at the Federation Cup.

Yashas Palaksha (left) and Lokesh Sathyanathan will be in fray in the men's 400m hurdles and long jump events respectively at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Lokesh, however, is currently among the leading Indian jumper for the season with a career best of 8.21 at the NCAA Indoor Championships last March. Since the competition fell outside AFI's purview, the athlete was urged to compete in the Federation Cup in Ranchi last month to prove his case. Lokesh managed a creditable 7.94m before suffering a minor injury that kept him away from the extended trials in Ludhiana this weekend.

Meanwhile, the quadrennial event will also see the country's javelin star Neeraj Chopra open up his international season with a warm-up participation in a domestic competition also in consideration. Rohit Yadav and Yash Vir Singh were also included in the javelin squad despite not going past the qualification mark.

Squad: Men: 100m: Gurindervir Singh; **200m**: Animesh Kujur; **400m/4x400m Relay**: Vishal TK, Rajesh Ramesh; **110m Hurdles**: Tejas Ashok Shirse; **400m Hurdles**: Yashas P, Santhosh Kumar T; **5000m/10000m**: Gulveer Singh; **Decathlon**: Tejaswin Shankar; **High jump**: Sarvesh Anil Kushare, Aadarsh Ram J, Tejaswin Shankar; **Pole vault**: Dev Meena, Kuldeep Kumar; **Long jump**: Sreeshankar M, Lokesh Sathyanathan; **Triple jump**: Praveen Chithravel, Selva Prabhu; **Shot put**: Samardeep Singh Gill, Tajinderpal Singh Toor; **Javelin throw**: Neeraj Chopra, Rohit Yadav, Yash Vir Singh. **Women: 3000m SC/5000m**: Parul Chaudhary; **4x400m Relay**: Ansa Babu, Rashdeep Kaur, Neeru Pathak; **10000m racewalk**: Ravina, Priyanka; **High jump**: Pooja; **Shot put**: Manpreet Kaur; **Discus throw**: Seema, Nidhi R.

Doubles winners (from left) Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat with coach Anil Kumar Raju.

Karnataka's Ashwini-Shikha crowned champions

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka duo Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam eased past Tamil Nadu's Shreya Balaji and Delhi's Likhita Srivastava to lift the women's doubles title at the VV Natu Memorial All-India Senior Ranking badminton tournament in Pune on Sunday.

The top-seeded pair scored a 21-12, 21-15 victory in 35 minutes at the season-opening event on the domestic tour.

Ashwini and Shikha, the reigning senior national doubles champions, began on a slow note in both the games. Getting there act together following initial hiccups, the Karnataka pair then switched on to their attacking prowess to surge into big leads and close out the match in straight games.

Palar SC triumph in rain-affected final

BENGALURU, DHNS

LOCAL CRICKET

In a final contest affected by rain, Palar Sports Club, Kolar secured a 12-run win over Vultures Cricket Club to be crowned champions of the KSCA Senior Women's T20 tournament at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here.

With Shreya S Chavan's 30-run knock turning out to be the best effort, Palar SC managed to post 123 for seven in 20 overs. Prathyusha C remained unbeaten at 28.

The chase for Vultures CC began on a promising note but with the sky opening up midway through their batting saw the target being revised to 86 in 12 overs. VCC could only manage 74 for two in 12 overs to finish second best.

Brief scores: Palar SC, Kolar: 123/7 in 20 overs (Shreya S Chavan 30, Prathyusha C 28 n.o.; Pooja Kumari M 2-31, Kinjal B Patel 2-18) bt Vultures CC: 74/2 in 12 overs. by 12 runs. (Match was interrupted by rain during the 2nd innings. Later target was revised to 86 in 12 overs).

Palar Sports Club - winners of the KSCA Senior Women's T20 tournament at the M Chinnaswamy stadium on Sunday. FROM LEFT: (Standing) Shiwani, Shreya S Chavan, BV Harusha Reddy, Sakshi Munavalli, Soumya Verma, Myra Jain, BG Tejashwini, Saina Kapoor, Priya S Chavan, Chintana. (Sitting) Prerana GR, Vijay (admin), Inchara CU, Arjun Dev (coach), Prathyusha C, Kiran Uppoor (coach), Taranth (coach).

Knicks end 53-year wait for NBA title

LOS ANGELES, AFP

The New York Knicks, fueled by a sensational 45 points from Jalen Brunson, rallied again to beat the San Antonio Spurs 94-90 and win their first NBA title in 53 years on Saturday.

The Knicks won the best-of-seven championship series 4-1, denying Victor Wembanyama and his young Spurs teammates on their home floor to lift the trophy for the first time since 1973.

The Knicks, who recovered from 29 points down in game four in the biggest comeback win in Finals history, erased a double-digit deficit to win for the fourth time in the series.

Brunson scored eight of the Knicks' meagre 13 first-quarter points.

New York Knicks players hoist the NBA trophy. REUTERS

They trailed by 16 in the second quarter and were down by 10 early in the fourth, but Brunson wouldn't let them lose.

"I've got no words," Brunson said after setting a Knicks record for points in a Finals game, surpassing Willis Reed's 38 in game three of the team's 1970 triumph over the Los Angeles Lakers.

French star Wembanyama scored 19 points.

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

Brazil escape Morocco scare after first-half horror show

Vinicius' magic saves 5-time champs the blushes in tough opener

EAST RUTHERFORD (NEW JERSEY), REUTERS

Brazil endured a dismal opening 30 minutes against Morocco, with the World Cup giants appearing bereft of ideas before Vinicius Junior hauled them back into the contest with a flash of familiar Real Madrid magic.

Some Brazilian observers called it the team's worst spell of football since the 7-1 loss to Germany in 2014, though unlike that national trauma, Saturday's stumble will likely prove inconsequential.

Vinicius's trademark surge down the left and sublime finish rescued Brazil after Ismael Saibari had given Morocco a deserved lead, preventing a first-half wobble from turning into something far more damaging.

For Carlo Ancelotti, however, the draw left a pile of uncomfortable questions before Friday's match against Haiti. Brazil's problems had been advertised well in advance of the tournament: a midfield short on creativity and control, and a glaring lack of specialist fullbacks.

Brazil	Morocco
1	1

Those concerns were sharpened by Ancelotti's squad makeup. He selected only five midfielders in his 26-man group and just one specialist right back, Wesley, who was later ruled out through injury.

Instead of replacing him with another right back, Ancelotti called up an extra midfielder, leaving two centre backs to contest a makeshift role.

Against Morocco, that gamble looked reckless. Roger Ibanez, the Saudi Arabia-based centre back asked to operate on Brazil's right side, endured a miserable first half, struggling with the pace of Noussair Mazraoui and Bilal El Khannouss and misplacing routine passes.

Brazil's right flank became a Morocco playground, with Lucas Paqueta also struggling badly. It was a breakdown between Paqueta and Ibanez that helped create the move leading to Saibari's goal.

Yet the performance that may worry Ancelotti the most came from Casemiro.

The 34-year-old midfielder, expected to be one of Brazil's anchors after a good season with Manchester United, repeatedly lost possession, misplaced passes and was caught out of position.

Ancelotti acted at halftime, replacing Ibanez and Casemiro with Danilo and Fabinho.

The changes steadied Brazil almost immediately. Danilo brought calm to the defence, while Fabinho, formerly of Liverpool, restored shape and authority in midfield. Brazil looked far more balanced after the break and controlled long spells, creating enough chances to suggest they might yet win.

There was also an attacking rethink. Ancelotti's decision to start Brentford striker Igor Thiago ahead of Matheus Cunha, Luiz Henrique and Endrick did little for Brazil's rhythm.

The forward looked lost in translation, struggled to combine with Raphinha and Vinicius, and made little impact before being withdrawn.

The introductions of Cunha and Luiz Henrique, alongside Fabinho and Danilo, gave Brazil sharper movement, better passing options and a clearer attacking structure.

The Italian accepted Brazil had fallen well short, while urging calm after a ragged opening night.

"I think we have to reassess what we did in this first match. We didn't play well," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"There were a few issues: the team was unbalanced, we lost several balls, and we have to do better in that regard. We improved in the second half, but we cannot lose heart.

"This is the first match of the World Cup and we can't judge ourselves as if the team should be perfect from the outset."

The dilemma now is whether Ancelotti rewards form with his next selection. In a World Cup, there is little time for experiments. Brazil are chasing a sixth title after 24 years of frustration, and their manager has already been given a loud warning: mistakes must be corrected quickly.

Vinicius Junior celebrates after scoring Brazil's equaliser against Morocco during their group match of the World Cup in East Rutherford. REUTERS

Ancelotti urges Brazil to not panic

EAST RUTHERFORD (USA), AFP

Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said that "you don't win a World Cup based on your first match" after the five-time champions laboured to a 1-1 draw with Morocco on Saturday.

The Selecao were in danger of losing their opening game at a World Cup for the first time since 1934 after falling behind to Ismael Saibari's goal in New Jersey.

Carlo Ancelloti

Vinicius Junior struck a superb equaliser to earn a point for Brazil but Ancelotti admitted it was not the type of performance expected from his team.

"I think this was a tough match, especially in the beginning. I think the team was a bit anxious and nerves were all over the place," said Ancelotti. "We didn't play well, but we cannot lose heart. This is the first match in the World Cup and we can't... think the team is doing perfectly from the get-go.

"This was the result we had. It wasn't bad, but we'll keep picking up from the second match on. You don't win a World Cup based on your first match."

Ancelotti tipped Vinicius to excel at the tournament as the leader of the attack, a role he will fulfil even when Brazil's all-time record scorer Neymar returns from a calf injury.

"He did well. He was very dangerous and I think he has everything in his power to have a great World Cup," Ancelotti said of the Real Madrid forward.

However, Vinicius rued Brazil's sluggish start against a Morocco side that had been told by their coach to approach the match with no fear.

"We started on a really bad note," said the 25-year-old. "We conceded that first goal and after that happens it's hard to get it going, you know, it's the first match, it's always hard.

"But we've got to improve and continue to grow because the competition is only but starting. This is the World Cup, there are no easy matches.

"But I don't think there's a lot to say now. I think we really have to improve."

Morocco captain Achraf Hakimi praised the display of the 2022 semi-finalists, who suggested they will again be a tough proposition in North America.

"Proud of the effort of the team, we drew, but we are happy with our performance. We still have to improve every game, so that is what we're going to be focused on right now," Hakimi told Fox. Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi was left with the feeling that his team could, and perhaps should, have taken more from the contest though.

Australia stun Turkey as selection gamble pays off

VANCOUVER, AFP

Australia scored a stunning 2-0 upset over Turkey in their World Cup Group D opener on Saturday as coach Tony Popovic's bold selection gamble paid off.

Nestory Irankunda and Connor Metcalfe scored the goals and rookie goalkeeper Patrick Beach produced a string of crucial saves to help secure a famous Australian victory at Vancouver's BC Place Stadium.

Australia coach Popovic had pulled off a massive shock in his starting line-up, dropping experienced captain and goalkeeper Maty Ryan in favour of Beach, winning only his third cap.

Vice-captain Jackson Irvine was also dropped in favour of 21-year-old midfielder Paul Okon-Engstler in a starting XI that featured 10 World Cup debutants.

Australia	Turkey
2	0

Both of those selections proved to be inspired, with Beach pulling off a string of fine saves to deny Turkey, who dominated possession and territory but could not find a way past the Australian goalkeeper.

Okon-Engstler meanwhile was instrumental in setting up the opening goal in the first half, unfurling a long ball that split the Turkish defence and sent Irankunda racing in on goal to score.

Turkey -- playing in the World Cup for the first time since finishing third at the 2002 tournament -- arrived in North America dreaming of making a serious run in the knockout rounds.

But their talented team made up largely of players who regularly compete in the European Champions League were unable to get to grips with a well-organised Socceroos line-up.

One of Turkey's best chances came in the 27th minute when Real Madrid's Arda Guler forced a smart save from Beach with a rasping shot.

Just seconds after that chance though Australia took the lead.

Beach picked out Okon-Engstler deep in the Australia half, and the 21-year-old midfielder pumped the ball upfield for Irankunda.

The Australia winger still had plenty to do but a clever first touch took him clear of the covering defence before he tucked away a low finish.

Irankunda celebrated by sprinting to the edge of the pitch and pretending to box the corner flag, mimicking former Australia skipper Tim Cahill's signature goal celebration.

Turkey thought they had equalised three minutes later after Abdulkerim Bardakci's piledriver from outside of the area hurtled towards goal. But Beach got the slightest of fingertips to divert the ball onto the post and Australia survived again.

Beach kept up his commanding form in the second half, turning a Guler free-kick wide for a corner on 57 minutes.

With Beach continuing to make save after save, Australia made the game safe in the 75th minute when Metcalfe picked the ball up in midfield, advanced on goal and shot home from 25 yards.

The win leaves Australia level on three points with Group D leaders the United States, with the two teams due to meet in Seattle on Friday.

Nestory Irankunda celebrates scoring Australia's first goal against Turkey during their group match in Vancouver. AFP

Swiss miss target 26 times as Qatar snatch first WC point

SANTA CLARA (CALIFORNIA), REUTERS

Switzerland were confident of having their best-ever World Cup run, but their journey became a whole lot more complex after an unfathomable bout of misfiring opened the door for unheralded Qatar to snatch a point in their Group B opener.

The Swiss swagger was abundant in the blazing sunshine on Saturday, as a side playing in their sixth successive World Cup delivered a California crowd-pleaser by laying siege to the Qatar goal for almost the entire match, with a whopping 26 attempts.

They went ahead early through a Breel Embolo penalty but couldn't build on that, paying dearly for a stoppage-time defensive lapse that allowed Qatar to level, with Boualem Khoukhi's header going in off defender Miro Muheim, sparking jubilant scenes and leaving the Swiss shell-shocked.

Switzerland	Qatar
1	1

While the match was historic for Qatar, who won their first-ever World Cup point, it was yet another one for the Swiss to forget in a tournament in which they're seemingly cursed after round-of-16 exits in five of their last six appearances.

No one will fault the charismatic Swiss coach Murat Yakin for his aggressive, all-out gameplan, but it was a match Switzerland should have won with ease.

With his front line stuttering, he may need a tactical rethink ahead of the remaining Group B games against more challenging opponents - co-hosts Canada and a potentially tricky Bosnia.

If Switzerland are to be dark horses at this World Cup, Yakin may have a lot of work to do.

"It really hurts a lot," he said, describing it as two points lost.

"Now we have to get back to the drawing board, assess the match and come back stronger."

Yakin ditched the back four that he had used in the qualifying campaign and opted for three in defence, which included Denis Zakaria, who had a licence to roam and was involved in many of the attacks.

Though Switzerland were inventive, impressive and energetic against Qatar, something was not working.

He might also rue his decision not to start the game with exciting 20-year-old attacking midfielder Johan Manzambi, who showed flashes of his confidence and flair instantly after coming on after 66 minutes.

When Embolo put Switzerland in front in the 17th minute, it had looked like the floodgates would open, with seemingly everyone but their goalkeeper camped out in the final third of the pitch.

The Swiss attacks were unrelenting, but ultimately fruitless, with frustration taking over and leading to cracks in a steadfast defence that leaked only two goals in qualifying.

"We had an idea and we wanted to be very dominant, very attacking," Yakin said.

Qatar players celebrate after scoring their stoppage-time equaliser against Switzerland in a Group B game in Santa Clara, California. AFP

McGinn ends Scotland's 36-year wait

FOXBOROUGH (USA), AFP

A scrappy finish by John McGinn allowed Scotland to mark their return to the World Cup after a 28-year absence with a nervy 1-0 win over outsiders Haiti on Saturday.

Aston Villa captain McGinn fired in with the aid of a deflection just before the half-hour mark at the Gillette Stadium just outside Boston, which was filled to its 64,000 capacity with a majority of Scottish fans.

They have travelled to the United States in large numbers to follow Scotland's first World Cup campaign since 1998, and were able to celebrate a rare victory at the tournament as they go top of Group C. It is Scotland's first win at a World Cup since a 2-1 defeat of Sweden in Italy in 1990, and a first victory at any major tournament in 30 years, since Euro 96.

Steve Clarke's team are bidding to make history by reaching the knockout stages, something Scotland have never done at the World Cup.

Scotland	Haiti
1	0

They had to hang on grimly at the end, but the victory puts them on course to get to the last 32, especially as the eight best third-placed sides will go through from the group stage.

Haiti are one of the lowest-ranked sides at the tournament, at 84th in the world, and Scotland knew the importance of beating the Caribbean nation with tougher tests to come. They play Morocco at the same stadium in their next game on Friday before heading to Miami to take on Brazil.

Morocco and Brazil drew 1-1 in Saturday's other Group C encounter in New Jersey.

Haiti's achievement in getting to the World Cup is one of the most inspiring stories of this tournament, given the turmoil in the country which prevented the team playing qualifiers at home.

Their line-up included midfielder Jean-Ricner Bellegarde and striker Wilson Isidor, both of whom featured regularly in the English Premier League this season.

But there is greater depth in the Scotland side, with the likes of McGinn, skipper Andy Robertson and Scott McTominay. The Napoli attacking midfielder, scorer of an iconic overhead kick in the decisive win over Denmark which sealed qualification, was fit to start this game after shaking off a stomach bug.

McTominay almost gave a Scotland team playing in salmon pink the lead in the 17th minute, when he arrived at the edge of the area to crash a shot off the post from a Ben Gannon-Doak lay-off.

Haiti were beginning to grow as a threat when Scotland took the lead on 28 minutes.

Che Adams stretched the opposition defence before Gannon-Doak's ball in fell to McGinn, and his shot found the net via the outstretched leg of Bellegarde.

They were unable to build on that, as Haiti forced them back and stepped up the pressure in the closing stages as they sought to avoid defeat in a World Cup game for the first time.

French-born Ruben Providence was a regular threat on the wing and imposing centre-forward Frantzdy Pierrot almost equalised in the 85th minute, but his towering header went just wide.

Haiti, who lost all three games in their only previous World Cup appearance in 1974, now face Brazil next in Philadelphia.

Scotland's John McGinn shoots the winner during their Group C match against Haiti at Boston Stadium on Sunday. REUTERS

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

FIFA WORLD CUP

Portugal to honour Jota with special wristbands

Portugal's World Cup squad will wear commemorative wristbands in tribute to late former teammate Diogo Jota **(in pic)**, midfielder Vitinha said on Saturday, as they prepare to open their Group K campaign against DR Congo next week, reports Reuters from Miami.

The wristbands, a gift from Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, carry the names of all squad members alongside that of former Portugal forward Jota, who died with his brother in a car crash in northwestern Spain last year.

Jota earned 49 caps and scored 14 goals for Portugal, and his absence has been felt deeply by his team-mates.

Two men charged for Eng team's gear theft

Two men -- Mustafa Salik and Erfan Kamal (both of San Antonio, Texas) -- have been charged with one felony count each of receiving stolen property late Saturday after England's national team discovered that some of its equipment had been stolen while The Three Lions were moving from their pre-training base in Florida to their World Cup base camp in Kansas City, reports AP from Kansas City.

Iranian team to arrive in the United States

Iran's participation in the tournament was shrouded in doubt for months after the United States and Israel launched an aerial assault on the Islamic Republic that became a wider Middle East war, reports AFP from LA.

But on Sunday the team is due to fly into Los Angeles from its training camp in Mexico on the eve of its first game.Iran take on New Zealand in the city on Monday.

At Bay Area, empty red seats are everywhere

There were thousands of empty seats scattered throughout Levi's Stadium during Qatar's surprising 1-1 draw with Switzerland on Saturday at the World Cup, reports AP from Santa Clara.

On an unseasonably warm June afternoon by Bay Area standards, with the temperature at kickoff around 82 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius), many of those vacant seats were on the east side of the stadium that typically can get very hot for much of the year.

With the Swiss fans clad it bright red, they blended in with the empty red seats. The attendance was listed at 67,966, which is close to the official capacity of 68,827.

Japan coach sorry after ending Endo's dream

Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu on Saturday described Wataru Endo as "hurt" and apologised after torpedoing the captain's World Cup dreams on the eve of the tournament, reports AFP from Dallas.

The Liverpool midfielder abruptly announced on Thursday that his international career was over, having failed to recover from injury ahead of Japan's opening match against the Netherlands.

Moriyasu said it had been his call that the 33-year-old should not be involved following a foot injury.

England squad arrives at base camp

Harry Kane said England had enjoyed "great preparation" ahead of their World Cup campaign as the squad touched down in Kansas City -- their base camp for the tournament, reports AFP from Kansas City.

Thomas Tuchel's men arrived in the Midwest on Saturday following a camp in Florida, where they played two friendly matches, against New Zealand and Costa Rica, winning both.

They are one of the favourites to win the WC after coming close to winning silverware at recent tournaments.

Spain face Cape Verde in clash of swag & wonder

European champs in hunt of big win against debutants

ATLANTA, REUTERS

Spain arrive in Atlanta with the air of a team expecting a long World Cup summer, but on Monday they face opponents carrying an equally powerful feeling: the giddy disbelief of a nation seeing its name on the tournament board for the first time.

The European champions open their Group H campaign against Cape Verde, with Uruguay and Saudi Arabia also in the section, in a fixture that looks on paper like a meeting of different football planets. Luis de la Fuente's side have become close to immovable over the last four years, going 30 matches unbeaten since a 1-0 friendly loss to Colombia at Wembley in March 2024. Since then Spain have recorded 23 wins and seven draws playing some of the most entertaining, attacking football seen in recent times.

Lamine Yamal (centre) will be one of the vital cogs for Spain as they kick off their World Cup campaign against Cape Verde. REUTERS

The only wrinkle in that spotless-looking run was a 5-4 penalty defeat to Portugal in the 2025 Nations League final after a 2-2 draw following extra time, in a match where Spain twice led but failed to retain the title they had won in 2023.

Cape Verde, however, are not merely in North America to provide the romance. The Blue Sharks were one of the surprise qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup and, with fewer than 600,000 inhabitants, are the third smallest country by population to reach the tournament after Iceland in 2018 and Curacao, also in 2026.

Their rise has been stitched together from an archipelago and a diaspora. That blend proved highly effective in qualifying, where Cape Verde won seven of their 10 games, lost only once and claimed a stunning home victory over Cameroon. Their World Cup place may feel like a fairy tale, but Cape Verde have been building credibility for years. In 2013 they qualified for their first Africa Cup of Nations and reached the quarterfinals at the first attempt.

Spain, meanwhile, may take a cautious approach with Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, who are in the final stages of recovery from hamstring injuries sustained in April. Both returned to training with their teammates on Thursday, but De la Fuente may decide patience is wiser than risk.

For Spain, the target is a second World Cup title after their 2010 triumph in South Africa. For Cape Verde, Monday offers something rarer still: the first page of a story their supporters have waited generations to read.

Belgium eye statement start as Egypt chase first WC win

Mohamed Salah

SEATTLE, REUTERS

Belgium will seek to underline their credentials as Group G favourites when they open their World Cup campaign against Egypt here on Monday, but the Africans can draw confidence from victory when the sides last met and will hope a disciplined gameplan can frustrate one of Europe's leading sides.

Belgium arrive in North America among contenders to progress deep into the tournament despite being some way removed from the generation that delivered a third-place finish at the 2018 World Cup, the best result in the country's history.

While Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku and Thibaut Courtois remain key figures, coach Rudi Garcia has overseen a gradual transition towards a younger core led by Jeremy Doku, Amadou Onana and Charles De Ketelaere.

Belgium are expected to dominate possession, while Egypt defend deep and look to break through Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush.

Egypt are making only their fourth World Cup appearance and remain in search of a first victory at the finals after seven winless matches across previous tournaments.

The Pharaohs will take encouragement from the last meeting between the sides, when they claimed a 2-1 victory in a friendly in Kuwait in November 2022.

Monday's match will also reunite Salah with Garcia, who coached the forward at AS Roma before his move to Liverpool.

Garcia acknowledged the threat posed by his former player.

"We have a huge amount of respect for the other three sides in our group," Garcia told FIFA.com.

"This is what the World Cup is all about. We know Egypt well; they're one of the best teams in Africa. I know all about Mo Salah as I coached him at Roma."

Salah remains the focal point of Egyptian hopes and arrives eager to make his mark on the biggest stage after injury limited his impact at the 2018 World Cup.

Belgium have been mentioned as potential dark horses, but Garcia is reluctant to look beyond the group stage.

"Let's start by respecting our group-stage opponents. Let's beat them, finish top of the group, and then we'll see how far we can go," he said.

On paper Belgium possess greater quality across the pitch and will expect to begin their campaign with three points. Egypt, however, have little to lose and will back themselves to frustrate their opponents long enough for Salah and Marmoush to exploit openings on the counterattack.

Kevin De Bruyne

New-look Uruguay test Saudi dreams of another upset

MIAMI, REUTERS: Saudi Arabia will attempt to recreate their World Cup magic from 2022 when they face Marcelo Bielsa's Uruguay in their Group H opener on Monday, but this time it is uncertainty rather than confidence driving the Gulf nation's campaign.

Saudi Arabia arrive under new coach Georgios Donis, who has no international tournament experience and was appointed less than two months before the World Cup after a dramatic managerial upheaval when Herve Renard was dismissed in April.

Renard had secured his place in Saudi football history four years ago when he masterminded a stunning 2-1 victory over eventual champions Argentina in Qatar, one of the greatest upsets in World Cup history.

Brought back in 2024 after Roberto Mancini's brief and unsuccessful tenure, the Frenchman was expected to restore the intensity and organisation that had made Saudi Arabia tricky opponents in Doha.

Instead, inconsistent performances and concerning defeats, including a 4-0 loss to Egypt and a 2-1 setback against Serbia in friendly matches, prompted a late managerial change before a daunting group featuring Spain, Uruguay and Cape Verde.

Donis, a former Blackburn Rovers and Sheffield United midfielder with extensive managerial experience in Saudi club football, now faces the challenge of reviving confidence in a squad that has struggled to build momentum.

Uruguay's Federico Valverde (left) and Saudi Arabia's Salem al-Dawsari will be key to their team's fortunes when the two clash in a Group H match. AFP

De Bruyne savours 4th appearance

RENTON (USA), AP

Kevin De Bruyne has accomplished plenty in his decorated career. Yet, the star Belgian midfielder does not plan to take his fourth World Cup appearance for granted.

Two days ahead of Belgium's World Cup opener against Egypt, the 35-year-old De Bruyne stressed much has changed since his days as a Premier League sensation for Manchester City. Nearly two decades removed from representing his home country for the first time and 119 appearances later, the two-time Premier League player of the season considers himself grateful to do so.

"It's an honour for me to still be here after playing for the national team for about 16 years. So, that means I've done something good," De Bruyne said with a laugh during Saturday's press conference. "Hopefully I can play a good tournament and do something well for Belgium."

The 2025-26 season, his first with Serie A club Napoli, was a challenging one for De Bruyne after 10 years at City, during which he scored 108 goals in 285 games to help the English club to six Premier League titles, two FA Cups and a Champions League trophy. In October, De Bruyne had a severe lesion to his thigh muscle and did not return until March 6.

Kevin De Bruyne

Since March, De Bruyne has appeared in 10 Serie A matches, as well as four friendlies for Belgium. In the most recent, on June 6, he scored during a 5-0 victory against Tunisia.

Before Belgium's practice at the training facility of Major League Soccer's Seattle Sounders, De Bruyne declared himself ready for the tournament.

"I have done everything I could to get fit," De Bruyne said in French, "and I feel that way too."

Even with a clean bill of health, De Bruyne knows he has fewer chances to play for the Belgium national team.

Sweden take on Tunisia after rocky build up

Graham Potter

MONTERREY, REUTERS

Sweden are set for their opening World Cup match against Tunisia in Monterrey on Sunday but it has been a long and winding road to get here for the team and coach Graham Potter.

Sweden finished bottom of their qualifying group and needed a Nations League playoff lifeline to make it to the finals.

Potter started out from humble beginnings as a manager, going through the highs and lows of club football before finding himself on the cusp of his first World Cup game.

"If somebody had said to me when I started out coaching a bunch of students at Leeds Met University that I would end up via the fourth division in Swedish football here at the World Cup, of course I would have taken that journey. It's incredible," he told reporters on Saturday.

"So now I'm just at a point where I'm super-grateful, super-grateful for the career I've had, for the life I've had, and to be here now."

Back in October, Potter was licking his wounds following his early-season sacking by then-Premier League side West Ham United when the Swedes came calling after sacking coach Jon Dahl Tomasson in the midst of a dismal qualifying campaign.

Knowing they had that Nations League lifeline, Potter took the job and quickly set about simplifying how the Swedes played, ensuring that everyone knew their roles.

The team delivered two playoff wins against Ukraine and Poland that saw them through to the finals, where they will meet Tunisia, Netherlands and Japan in Group F.

Potter said all of his 26-man squad are fit and available for selection, meaning that he will be able to deploy the feared strike partnership of Viktor Gyokeres, who got the winner in the playoff against Poland, and Alexander Isak up front.

"I wouldn't replace them with anyone," Sweden captain Victor Lindelof said. "I'm really happy to have the two of them.

The pair will face a Tunisia defence that did not concede a goal in their qualifying group, but Potter said his team will be ready for that challenge.

On Monday

Sweden vs **Tunisia** (7.30 am)

Spain vs **Cape Verde** (9.30 pm)

On Tuesday morning

Belgium vs **Egypt** (12.30 am)

Saudi Arabia vs **Uruguay** (3.30 am)

Iran vs **New Zealand** (6.30 am)

All timings in IST

Jyothir wins Rapid Chess

BENGALURU, DHNS: Kilari Jyothir Adithya of Karnataka emerged champion at the 60th BRDCA Open Category rapid chess tournament here on Sunday.

Jyothir, rated 1741, scored six points from seven rounds to clinch the Open title and take home a cash prize of Rs 7,000 along with the trophy. Karnataka's Ishaan Bhansali finished runner-up while Nepal's Thapa Krishna secured third place, both also ending with six points.

The tournament attracted 277 players and was conducted in Open, U-10, U-12 and U-16 categories under the Swiss league format over seven rounds with a time control of 20 minutes plus a five-second increment per move.

Results (Winners only) Men: **Open Category:** Kilari Jyothir Adithya (Kar); **U-16:** Aarush Srivastava; **U-12:** Saksham Pandey; **U-10:** Alaap SA.
Women: U-16: Shree A S; **U-12:** Aarohi Kulkarni; **U-10:** Janvi SK.
Awards: Best Performer: Men: Above 61: Hariharan Subramony; **Above 51:** Harish G.
Women: Above 41: Meera Singhal; **Above 21:** Rani Puja.
Best school: Viswa Vidyapeeth School ICSE **Best academy:** Anees Darbari Chess Academy.

Dhiraj slays Korean giants to double gold at World Cup

Archer teams up with Kumkum to beat Oly champs Kim and Oh in mixed final

ANTALYA, PTI

Dhiraj Bommadevara completed a memorable golden double in Antalya, stunning Paris Olympics bronze medallist Lee Woo Seok of South Korea 7-3 in a gripping final to clinch his maiden individual Archery World Cup gold, just hours after winning the recurve mixed team title with Kumkum Mohod, here on Sunday.

The Indian Army archer, ranked 18th in the world, produced a composed display against the higher-ranked Korean to cap a breakthrough day in his career.

Dhiraj raced to a 5-1 lead by taking the opening two sets 30-29 and 29-28 before sharing the third set 27-27.

Lee fought back in the fourth set, shooting two 10s and a nine to win it 29-27 as Dhiraj failed to find a perfect score, reducing the deficit to 3-5.

But the Indian did not let the momentum shift. Leading 5-3, Dhiraj closed out the contest in style with a flawless final set, drilling three consecutive 10s, including an X, to seal the gold medal.

Dhiraj returned to individual competition just a couple of hours after winning the recurve mixed team gold with Kumkum Mohod and he produced a remarkable comeback to defeat Germany's Moritz Wieser 6-4 in a hard-fought semifinal.

Kumkum Mohod (left) and Dhiraj Bommadevara defeated Korea's Olympic champions Kim Je-deok and Oh Ye-jin 5-1 in the mixed team recurve final of the Archery World Cup Stage 3 in Antalya on Sunday. AAI

He slipped into the seven-ring with his second arrow and lost the opening set 26-27. The next two sets ended level at 28-28, leaving the Indian trailing 2-4 after three sets.

Facing elimination, Dhiraj responded emphatically, shooting three 10s to take the fourth set 30-27 and draw level at 4-4.

Under pressure in the deciding set, Wieser shot a wayward five with his second arrow. Dhiraj, however, held his nerve, returning scores of 9, 10 and 9 to win the set 28-23 and book his maiden World Cup final.

Teen Kumkum shines

Displaying maturity beyond her age, the 17-year-old Kumkum said she focused on the process rather than the opposition.

"I believed in myself completely. I just focused on the process and didn't think about who was standing in front of me," she said. "I think I shot better today than I did in Shanghai. But definitely that gold medal there gave me a lot of confidence."

The victory marked India's second triumph over South Korea in as many months and underlined the growing confidence within the recurve setup in the build-up to the Asian Games in Japan in three months' time.

At the Shanghai World Cup last month, the women's trio of Deepika Kumari, Kumkum and Ankita Bhakat had stunned the record 10-time Olympic champions in the semifinals en route to gold.

For Dhiraj, 24, and 17-year-old Kumkum, there was no trace of intimidation against a South Korean side featuring Kim, the Tokyo Olympics mixed team gold medallist alongside An San and a member of South Korea's Paris Olympics gold-winning men's team.

Margaretta wins feature event

BENGALURU RESULTS

Pesi Shroff-trained Margaretta, ridden by Vivek G, won Zavaray S Poonawalla Fillies Championship Stakes, the feature event of the races on Sunday.

1. The Kranji Plate - 2000M: Stalingrad (Francis Arun Kumar) N Arun Kumar 1, Storm Shadow (Vishal) 2, Azalea (A Prakash) 3, Fils De France (Antony Raj) 4. WB: 2 1/4, 2 1/4, 6. T: 2:11.21. Tote: Rs 20 (w) 12, 11 p; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs 27; Fc: Rs 39; Q: Rs 20; Tri: Rs 57 & 39; Exp: Rs 74 & 48. TB: I Ghatala; Fav: Stalingrad.

2. The Malenahalli Plate - 1600M: Tyaaraa (Cherie Sports and Hothur Sajjad Wahab) Antony Raj 1, Sea Diamond (Md Ashraf Reza) 2, Agape (S Sachin) 3, Turkoman (Faizan Khan) 4. Not run: Michiko. WB: Nk, 3 1/2, Nose. T: 1:43.82. Tote: Rs 22 (w) 12055, 20 p; Shp: Rs 195; Thp: Rs 68; Fc: Rs 565; Q: Rs 486; Tri: Rs 2624 & 843; Exp: Rs C/F. TB: Faraz Arshad; Fav: Tyaaraa.

3. The Treasure Girl Plate - 1100M: Ravishing Queen (K Kaliyaperumal, M Rishad and Vazifdar) Suraj Narredu 1, Garzian (Vivek G) 2, Auspicious King (Rajesh Kumar) 2, Atman (Antony Raj) 4. Not run: Nimbus Speed. WB: 2 1/2, 2, 4 3/4. T: 1:07.88. Tote: Rs 18 (w) 12, 12, 12. p; Shp: Rs 27; Thp: Rs 43 ; Fc: Rs 37 ; Q: Rs 26 ; Tri: Rs 214 & 79; Exp: Rs 365 & 120. TB: J E Mckeown; Fav: Ravishing Queen.

4. The Parsiana Plate - 1400M: Bellavista (Nirash Bothara) S Sachin 1, Aquastic (Yash Narredu) 2, Small Dreams (Akshay Kumar) 3, Silicon Star (A Ramu) 4. WB: 1 1/4, 5 1/4, Shd T: 1:27.16. Tote: Rs 31 (w) 17, 12, 16 p; Shp: Rs 36; Thp: Rs 47; Fc: Rs 174; Q: Rs 73; Tri: Rs 311 & 156; Exp: Rs 1484 & 595. TB: Neil Devaney; Fav: Silicon Star.

5. Stewards Cup - 1400M: Crosswater (Dilip Thomas) Aleemuddin 1, Elysium (Akshay Kumar) 2, Star Studded (R N Darshan) 3, Don Carlos (S Saqlain) 4. WB: 1/2, 1/2, 1. T: 1:28.20. Tote: Rs 48 (w) 28, 12 p; Shp: Rs 51; Thp: Rs 31 ; Fc: Rs 138 ; Q: Rs 34 ; Tri: Rs 319 & 161; Exp: Rs 824 & 224. TB: A Mangalorkar; Fav: Elysium.

6. The Zavaray S Poonawalla Fillies Championship Stakes - 1600M: Margaretta (Mehernosh H Deboo and Suzita M Deboo) Vivek G 1, Havoc (Suraj Narredu) 2, Starzella (Antony Raj) 3, Vortex (Akshay Kumar) 4. WB: 2 3/3, Lnk, 3 1/2. T: 1-41.13. Tote: Rs 14 (w) 13, 31 p; Shp: Rs 33; Thp: Rs 33; Fc: Rs 72; Q: Rs 48 ; Tri: Rs 108 & 28; Exp: Rs 367 & 233. TB: P Shroff; Fav: Margaretta.

Jackpot: Rs 917. **Mini Jackpot:** Rs 170. **Treble I:** Rs 1249. **Treble II:** Rs 10.
Note: The last two races were cancelled due to poor visibility and unfavourable underfoot conditions.

Lloyd clinches La Masia thriller

BENGALURU, DHNS: Lloyd G Bestain struck the decisive goal as La Masia FC edged ISRO FC 3-2 in a closely-fought BDFA C Division League encounter at the Bangalore Football Stadium here on Sunday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

After conceding an early goal, La Masia responded strongly through Manoj and Aswani Yadav before Lloyd found the winner in the 32nd minute. ISRO FC pulled one back through Anand, but La Masia held firm to seal all three points.

Results: Group 9: La Masia FC: 3 (Manoj 15th, Aswani Yadav 26th, Lloyd G Bestain 32nd) bt ISRO FC: 2 (Sreejith Gopalan KP 4th, Anand 36th); New Lucky Star FC: 4 (Uday Kumar A 6th, 40th, Ethan K Jacob 17th, Niin Thampan 24th) bt Active Union FC: 3 (Rohan Bhujel 15th, 20th, Likha Tskey 42nd).
Group 10: Jupiter FC: 3 (Surya Prakash S 17th, Ramesh Babu 28th, Samarth P 57th) bt Bangalore Boys FC: 1 (Aditya Sayam 30th); Vinayaka FC: 1 (Mohammed Touhid 23rd) bt Tilak Memorial FC: 0.
Group 12: Young Gems FC: 5 (Darshith Sanju 1st, 13th, Sufaid MK 6th, 15th, Da O Hi Mukhin 37th) bt Excelsior FC: 0.
D Division: Group F: Kraken FC: 6 (Zoran 5th, 50th pen, Medium11 9th, Nakul 15th, 20th, Vishal 35th) bt BPSS: 0; Revaluation FC: 3 bt Sathya FC: 0 via walkover.

CRICKET WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Smriti, Deepti get India off to a big win

Harmanpreet & Co crush Pakistan by 64 runs in opener

BIRMINGHAM, PTI

The peerless Deepti Sharma strangulated an out of sync Pakistan with a five-wicket haul after Smriti Mandhana's delectable half-century as India thrashed Pakistan by 64 runs to make a winning start to their Women's T20 World Cup campaign here on Sunday.

Courtesy Mandhana's classy 44-ball-68 and Richa Ghosh's fiery 34 off 17 balls, India managed a winning score of 170 for 6.

Save Muneeba Ali's 35-ball-41, there was no sting in Pakistan batting as they folded for a meagre 106 in 17 overs.

Having played her part in a priceless 45-run stand with Ghosh, Deepti was in her element with the ball, picking up a career-best 5 for 10 in 4 overs while left-arm spinner Shree Charani grabbed 3 for 21. Shafali Verma's happy knack of picking wickets also helped India.

En route her five-wicket haul, Deepti also became the highest wicket-taker in the history of Women's T20 Internationals.

With the third game being played on the same Edgbaston track, India got the advantage of bowling second as there was some turn on offer and the odd ball gripped, not allowing the batters to hit through the line. Deepti was literally unplayable on this pitch.

The most telling contribution during Indian fielding also came from Deepti, whose direct throw ended left-handed keeper-batter Muneeba's flashy innings.

Earlier, Mandhana's batting was grace personified as her regal knock along with Ghosh's cameo took India to a winning total.

Ghosh provided the final flourish as left-arm seamer Tasmia Rubab went for 23 runs in the penultimate over which eventually broke Pakistan's backbone.

India's Deepti Sharma (right) celebrates with team-mate Smriti Mandhana after dismissing Pakistan's Gull Feroza during their Women's T20 World Cup opener in Birmingham on Sunday. REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Shafali c Muneeba b Sadia	6
Mandhana c Fatima b Rameen	68
Rodrigues c Natalia b Tasmia	1
Harmanpreet c Natalia b Fatima	36
Fulmali st Muneeba b Sadia	1
Richa b Fatima	34
Deepti (not out)	12
Shreyanka (not out)	1
Extras: (NB-1, W-10)	11
TOTAL(for 6 wkts, 20 overs)	**170**

Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-18, 3-109, 4-110, 5-123, 6-168.
Bowling: Sadia Iqbal 4-0-41-2, Fatima Sana 4-0-33-2, Tasmia Rubab 4-0-41-1, Rameen Shamim 4-0-30-1, Nashra Sandhu 4-0-25-0.

PAKISTAN

Muneeba (run out)	41
Feroza c Fulmali b Deepti	12
Ayesha c Mandhana b Deepti	12
Saira c Kaur b Charani	2
Natalia c Kaur b Charani	7
Fatima c Mandhana b Shafali	0
Aliya c Rodrigues b Deepti	18
Rameen c Shreyanka b Charani	4
Nashra c Kaur b Deepti	4
Tasmia c Rodrigues b Deepti	0
Sadia Iqbal (not out)	1
Extras (LB-1, W-4)	5
TOTAL (all out, 17 overs)	**106**

Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-53, 3-58, 4-75, 5-77, 6-79, 7-91, 8-105, 9-105.
Bowling: Arundhati Reddy 2-0-21-0, Shreyanka Patil 3-0-17-0, Kranti Goud 1-0-14-0, Deepti Sharma 4-0-10-5, Shree Charani 4-0-21-3, Shafali Verma 3-0-22-1.
Result: India won by 64 runs.
PoM: Deepti Sharma.
India's next match: vs the Netherlands (June 17, in Leeds).

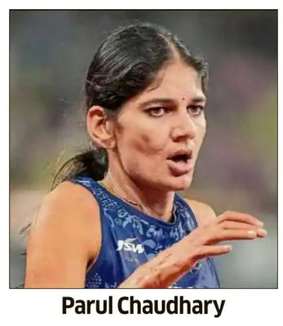
Parul betters 5000m NR

NEW DELHI, PTI: India's Parul Chaudhary bettered her own national record in the women's 5000m event by clocking a new personal best time of 15:04.26 to finish second at the Meeting Nikaia 2026 in Nice, France.

The Indian athlete finished the race behind Ethiopia's Bereka Seniya Mohammed, who just about edged out Parul from the top spot with a meet record time of 15:03.85. Alessia Zarbo of France ended third with a season best 15:16.83.

"Parul Chaudhary clocked a sensational 15:04.26 to finish 2nd and set a new National Record at the Meeting Nikaia 2026," the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) tweeted.

Saturday's effort meant Parul breached the AFI's Asian Games 2026 qualifying standard of 15:36.58s in the 5000m.



Parul Chaudhary

IN BRIEF

K'taka swim squad for Natls

Olympians Srihari Nataraj and Dhinidhi Desinghu will spearhead Karnataka's challenge at the 79th Senior National Aquatics Championship to be held at the Veer Savarkar Sports Complex in Ahmedabad from June 16 to 21, reports DHNS.

The reigning overall champions are fielding a total of 38 swimmers -- 20 male and 18 female -- who will be aiming to clinch the trophy yet again for the state.

Shelton wins ATP Stuttgart

BERLIN, AFP: American top seed Ben Shelton beat countryman and defending champion Taylor Fritz 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 to win the Stuttgart Open ATP title on Sunday.

Grass court specialist Fritz had never previously lost a final on the surface. Shelton broke the second seed once in the opening set and once in the third to claim victory in one hour and 48 minutes. The 23-year-old looked on the ropes at times but fought off nine of 11 Fritz break points.

Nitish 2.0: A more refined cricketer

Andhra all-rounder's improved bowling augurs well for India

SIDNEY KIRAN
DHARAMSALA, DHNS

For all his antics on and off the field that often attract a lot of flak, there's no denying the fact that Hardik Pandya is an invaluable asset to this Indian team in limited-overs cricket. That's because he's a gun all-rounder, one who can make game-changing impacts with both bat and ball, and there's hardly anyone close to him in the country at the moment.

But the big problem with Pandya is the frequent injury breakdowns. The chronic back problem from the early part of his career that forced him to go under the knife in 2019, the freak ankle injury in the 2023 World Cup, the recurrence of back spasms during this IPL and quadriceps strain that ruled him out of the just-begun Afghanistan series... the list is endless and may never end despite Indian think-tank's best efforts to protect a rare species like him.

A ray of hope, however, has come in the form of Nitish Kumar Reddy, the man who shot into the limelight with an exceptional century in just his second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground during the 2024-25 series against Australia. As evidenced in that knock, in fact during the series itself and thereafter, he's more of a batter who can bowl gentle medium pace rather than being equally skilled in both disciplines. That's the facet of his game the shy 23-year-old from Visakhapatnam is trying to improve as he attempts to lock in the key seaming all-rounder slot for the 2027 ODI World Cup.

With the marquee event scheduled to be held in pace-friendly South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia during October-November, such cricketers will be of vital importance and Nitish has begun work on it in right earnest over the last few months.

Sensing the need to improve his bowling speed by several notches to be more effective, Nitish reached out to fast-bowling and high-performance coach Steffan Jones just before the IPL after chancing upon the sought-after Englishman on social media. Although the stint with the former County player lasted only a week, the results have been phenomenal.

Jones, who has worked with the likes of Jofra Archer and Prasidh Krishna through his association with Rajasthan Royals as well as his own PaceLab consultancy, suggested three key changes to Nitish. First was fine-tuning the front-on action, changes to stride lengths, and then better delivery techniques. A fast learner, Nitish implemented those inputs instantly and even he has been left amazed with the output.

During the IPL, there were occasions when Nitish tipped the speed gun at 139 kmph. But more importantly, he could consistently crank it up from late 120s to mid-130s, a significant jump that makes a world of difference. At the same time, Nitish has also added ammunition to his bowling, like slower deliveries and yorkers—the perfect blockhole ball that scalped Afghanistan's centurion Rahmatullah Gurbaz in the opening ODI on Saturday at the HPCA Stadium. In terms of workload too, Nitish bowled a total of 31 overs in the IPL and bagged 8 wickets for Sunrisers Hyderabad - the best of his career.

Over the next seven months, India will play one-dayers against England, West Indies, New Zealand and Zimbabwe. It's a crucial road to the World Cup, where careers will be made, and Nitish is aware of the fact that Pandya's absence this series has given him a golden opportunity to make a strong case for himself.

"As I always keep telling myself, as an all-rounder, I have to do both jobs for my team. That's when the team is going to be in a great position. So I just have to show up when the captain gives me the ball and when the team needs some runs. I just have to show some intent. That's how I see myself as an all-rounder," said Nitish on Saturday.

The start has been promising. Nitish will be hoping to be more consistent.

Nitish Kumar Reddy's improvement as a pace bowler provides India a viable alternative for an injury-prone Hardik Pandya. PTI

Hamilton wins in Barcelona, ends Antonelli's streak

MONTMELO (SPAIN), AFP: Lewis Hamilton claimed his first victory for Ferrari on Sunday at the Barcelona-Catalunya Formula One Grand Prix, ending championship leader Kimi Antonelli's five-race winning streak.

The seven-time world champion finished ahead of George Russell and Lando Norris, while Antonelli was forced to abandon in the final stages because of a technical problem.

Hamilton, 41, cut down Antonelli's title lead to 41 points by triumphing on a Sunday nearly two years after he last won a race.

Mercedes polesitter Russell came in 19 seconds behind Hamilton, with Norris completing an all-British podium, the first since the 1968 United States Grand Prix.

Russell, pre-season favourite for the championship, arrived in Barcelona bemoaning bad luck for his recent struggles but after team-mate Antonelli edged in front of him late on he had some good fortune to cut the gap on the teenager to 53 points after the Italian abandoned.

With track temperatures up at 51 degrees Celsius, Hamilton opted for a three pit-stop strategy and it worked to perfection, with the third of those fortuitously coming while the virtual safety car was deployed.

Ferrari's heavily upgraded car may well have been fast enough for Hamilton to triumph anyway, as he recorded the 106th victory of his career.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen came in fourth, ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Isack Hadjar in the other Red Bull.

Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after clinching the Barcelona GP for his first win with Ferrari. REUTERS

Manpreet equals Tirkey's record but India lose to Dutch

ROTTERDAM, PTI: Veteran midfielder Manpreet Singh equalled former skipper Dilip Tirkey's record of 412 international appearances for India but the team lost 2-3 to the Netherlands in the FIH Men's Pro League game here on Sunday.

For the Netherlands, Miles Bukkens (3rd), Koen Bijen (23rd) and Timjen Reyenga (40th minute) were on target.

For India, Dilpreet Singh (9th) and Sukhjeet Singh (33rd) were the scorers.

Twice India equalised but couldn't stop Netherlands from netting the winner spoiling an eventful day for Manpreet.

Manpreet is also the only active player currently in the club of players with 400-plus senior international caps.

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